

Island Booknotes 2020

VOLUME 1

ISSUE 1

VOICES FROM BOCA GRANDE CELEBRATING A LOVE AFFAIR WITH BOOKS



PUBLISHED BY THE JOHANN FUST LIBRARY FOUNDATION

CONTRIBUTORS TO BOOK NOTES 2020

LOUISE AMORY – SIMONETTA BALZER – JANE CARVER – LINDA FAIRSTEIN

JANE GENIESSE – ALICE GORMAN – KAREN GRACE – DAVIS HAMMOND – SUSAN HANAFEE

CANDICE SHY HOOPER – SANDY JACOBS – JAN KARON – JULIAN KEEVIL – LINDSAY MAJOR

LES NASH – FRED RICH – DAVID SPARKS – LUCINDA SULLIVAN – JOHN THOMAS

TONI VANOVER – CHARLIE VESTNER – ELIOT VESTNER – DALY WALKER – NANCY WHITE

COVER ART BY PATRICIA CHRISTAKOS

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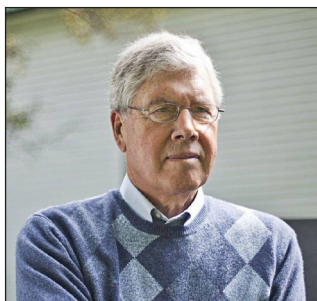
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Editor
Bobbie Marquis
Copy Editors
Barbara Edgerton
Sue Fuller



*A Note from the Johann Fust Library
Foundation President*

You hold in your hand *Island Book Notes 2020*. We hope that you will enjoy this premier issue. Traditionally, *Book Notes* was a catalog of events planned by the Foundation for the upcoming season. This year is different. As Viktor

Frankl said, "Life is never made unbearable by circumstances, but only by lack of meaning and purpose." In this, our 70th year, the purpose of the Library Foundation remains clear. It is explicitly stated in our mission, "To maintain and preserve the buildings and gardens of the library while providing a literary and cultural center for the residents and visitors of Boca Grande."

Island Book Notes 2020 features essays, book reviews, and poetry. It also introduces newly published works by island authors. We are grateful to the writers for their contributions. We are also thankful to our donors. Everything the Foundation does is accomplished through your generosity.

Visit our website at www.JFLFBG.org, and participate in the *Island Book Notes Writing Invitation*. Everyone has a chance to participate by responding to one of the prompts: "Why do you read?" "Why do you write?" or "What is a book that is important to you?" We hope to hear from many of you as Boca Grande's love affair with books continues.

John Cleghorn

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Johann Fust Library Foundation
JFLibraryFoundation@comcast.net
941.964.0211

WWW.JFLFBG.ORG

Visit the **Island Book Notes Writing Invitation** online.

Naming the Johann Fust Community Library

One of the most common questions we receive at the library is, "Who was Johann Fust? The simple answer is that he was a banker, but the following quote from Louise Amory's journal tells the story of how the library was named.

"While we were sitting by the fire the other night, I noticed Roger blinking so strenuously that I felt I must know what was brewing. Sometimes when I ask what's on his mind it turns out to be only a retirement plan for an insurance company or a bank merger or something uninteresting like that. But not that night. After puffing on his cigar a moment he said 'I've just decided what I shall name our Library: it's going to be called the Johann Fust Community Library of Boca Grande, Fla. 'Whew' I said – and who is Mr. Fust? Well – in brief – Johann Fust was a banker – Roger is a banker and bankers are in disrepute generally due to New Deal ideology. The popular people are the Forgotten men and the little man, and bankers are either war mongers or money grubbers or both. Quite naturally Roger feels that they have been a much needed commodity for a good long while and plans to honor Mr. Fust by wafting him out of the 15th century and featuring him in the 20th on our island of Boca Grande, Fla."

"Johann was born in 1400. Apparently in 1450 he financed Johannes Gutenberg, an inventor of his own age, in the development of printing by means of movable type. Gutenberg was not a practical person and Johann Fust was forced to take over the enterprise and complete it"

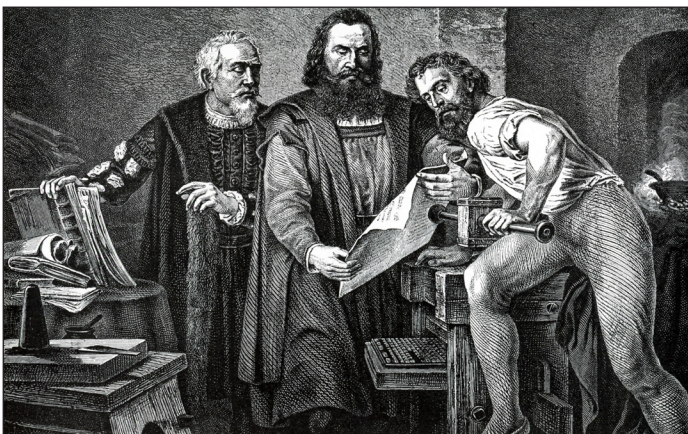
"I quote from a short sketch which is to be printed in a brochure for the Library: 'It was undoubtedly the workmen of Johann Fust who developed the beautiful type and printed what is now known as the Gutenberg Bible or the 42 line bible – the first book to be printed with movable type. It is the recording of thought by means of printing with movable type that stands as the great landmark in general education and in modern civilization.'"

"It is in honor of the banker, Johann Fust who by his intelligence, industry and self-denial acquired wealth and used the same for the enlargement of opportunity for his fellow man that the library is named: The Johann Fust Community Library of Boca Grande, Fla."

"Just the same 'I said,' you wait – people will still think he's your rich uncle!"



*Portrait courtesy of Louise Amory Smith,
granddaughter of Louise Amory*



Louise Amory

*Many thanks to Dr. Jane Carver
for transcribing Louise Amory's journal.*

Gutenberg (left) stands with business partner, Johann Fust, (center) and his assistant, Peter Schoeffer, gazing at the first 'proof.'



*Alice Gorman has been writing poetry and prose since childhood. She credits her mother for reading A.A. Milne and *The Secret Garden* out loud to her. One of her greatest pleasures has been her nearly twenty-year membership in the Live Poets' Society of Boca Grande.*

*Alice earned her MFA in Writing from Spalding University in 2005. Her fiction and creative nonfiction have been published in *Vogue*, *O*, *The Oprah Magazine*, *The Louisville Review* and others. Her first novel, *Valeria Vose* was published in 2018. Her poems have been published in *The Dead Mule School of Southern Literature* and anthologized in "Island Dreams," and *Routes*, "20 Years of Tenants Harbor Poetry Readings."*

Time

Years ago, still a child,
my body fresh
as field flowers,
my eyes clear
as an arctic stream,
my thoughts drifted
from adventure to adventure,
my heart sang
songs of romance:
a midnight swim
in the Blue Grotto,
a desert ride
behind a dark and dashing sheik,
a princely kiss
on a woodland pallet.
my life a dream
my future waiting outside.

Today, no longer a child,
my body growing brittle
as dried delphinium ,
my eyes cloudy, yet
focused on the real.

My thoughts still drift,
my heart still sings,
my romantic dreams
no longer wait.

I am my future
with my child inside.

*Alice Gorman
Maine July 2015
(revised August 2020)*

How to Live –or– A Life of Montaigne in One Question and Twenty Attempts at an Answer

By Sarah Bakewell

Published by Chatto & Windus, 2010

and

The Complete Essays of Montaigne

Translated by Donald M. Frame

Stanford University Press, 1958



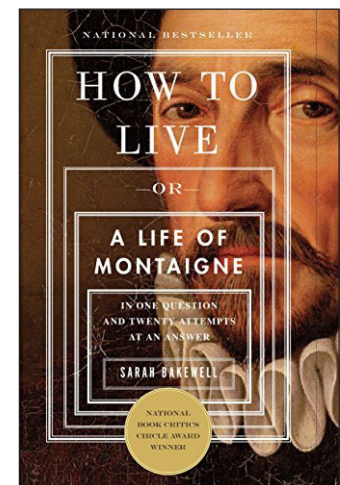
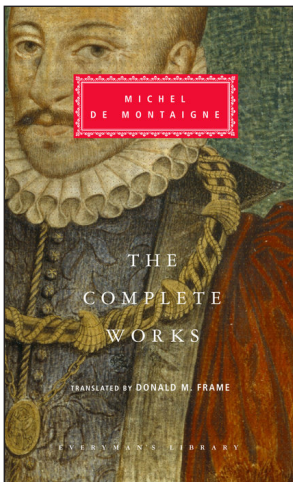
Jane Fletcher Geniesse, a former reporter with the New York Times, is the author of two biographies and a novel. A graduate of Radcliffe College and Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, Mrs. Geniesse has contributed articles to many publications and has been a guest speaker at book clubs.

Apparently, there are no end of readers today unfazed by Michel Eyquem de Montaigne's three enormous volumes of self-examination and find themselves declaring: "What! But that's me! That's exactly how I feel too!" Never mind that

their author lived in the 16th century. Montaigne called these lively interrogations of himself his "attempts" or "essays" into

the unfathomable mystery of who he was, what he thought about people and events—and so rich and complete was his idiosyncratic, yet sensible and insightful humanity that his observations ring familiar bells in modern hearts. Unlike his intellectual contemporaries given to philosophical arguments over "How to Die," Montaigne's preoccupation was with "How to Live." That, not as an exercise in defining morality, but one far wider and deeper. This is the title Sarah Bakewell chose for her fascinating biography of a brilliant nobleman born in the time of some of religion's bloodiest wars as Catholic and Protestant armies savaged each other, promoted by self-interested leaders and fueled by fanatics. He lived with death and dying around him—including death that

touched closely: his brother in an accident, his father to an agonizing kidney attack, five of his six children and most painful of all to the plague, his dearest friend, Etienne de La Boetie, author of "A Discourse on Voluntary Servitude." (This essay is worth reading today as it studies the phenomenon of loyalty to a leader despite the leader's lies, exploitations, and betrayals.) Initially terrified of dying himself, Montaigne suffered years of morbid fantasies. And then one day, violently knocked off his horse in the woods, Montaigne experienced a transformation, finally enjoying peace of mind as he slowly healed. From 1572 to his death in 1592 at 59, he became not only an optimist, approaching people and issues with humor and goodwill but began his long conversations that have endeared him to admiring multitudes over four hundred years.



Writing During Covid Days

I had taken the summer off from writing blogs and was focusing on remodeling our new house when the coronavirus put our world in turmoil. With social activities on hold and orders to stay away from the workmen at the remodel, I looked to my old friend – writing – for solace and a safe space.

I love to read, but it takes a back seat to my feelings about creating. Reading is hard for me. I can't pick up a book without looking at character development, sentence structure, plot line, grammar errors. I become envious, disillusioned or, in some cases, hypercritical. For example, when Stephen King spelled judgment with an e – as in judgement – in a recent book, I almost fell out of my chair. Turns out, both spellings are now acceptable. For a purist, this was a painful revelation. Plus, I couldn't stop thinking about the master's mistake.

So while reading can be wonderful, there's something about writing that soothes the soul. A writer births, develops and directs the lives, and sometimes deaths, of the people under her control. Writers can share memories, right old wrongs or create new ones or simply let their imagination wander. Playing the deity is fun but also a big responsibility. If someone donates eight hours or more to read what you have written, you had better give them their money's worth – emotionally and intellectually.

So, what transpired during my Covid writing session? I dusted off a mystery that I began crafting when I moved to Boca Grande eight years ago. Red tide and buzzards were in the air. I was just learning about the interesting people who live here, both the locals and the snowbirds. I hadn't met the inspirational Rosemary Bowler or the charming Martin Walker, author of the Bruno detective series. But I was eager and filled with characters begging to get out of my head and onto paper.

Now, with time on my hands and island experiences under my belt, my revisionist fingers have been tapping away at the computer keys and breathing life into the long-buried manuscript. At least, that's my hope. The mystery, *Scavenger Tides*, is completed and should be available in November. This is the synopsis:

When Leslie Elliott quits her public relations job to move to a small island in southwest Florida, her dream of becoming a mystery writer threatens to turn into a nightmare as buzzards lead her to a headless dog carcass and a human body rolls in with the summer storms and then disappears. Leslie's search for answers and her run-ins with the sheriff take her on a journey that involves a fisherman with too many secrets, a local couple struggling to survive in a millionaire's playground and dangerous men who will stop at nothing to protect their lucrative criminal activities.

The creative process kept me sane during these crazy times we are living in. I hope the end product doesn't disappoint anyone who decides to give my book, *Scavenger Tides*, a read.



Susan Hanafée is an award-winning former journalist whose career as a reporter for The Indianapolis Star newspaper spanned three decades. She is the author of "Never Name an Iguana," "Rutabagas for Ten," and the soon to be published, "Scavenger Tides."

Reading in Covid Times

We moved into our new home in Boca Bay's North Village in early March, just one week before my husband and I began the Covid self-quarantine, which kept us on-island until the end of June. We were careful to use face masks and social distance – even over cocktails with friends at the end of many anxious days. But getting through a pandemic when our beautiful library had to close its doors made life especially difficult.

As a writer and voracious reader, I was fascinated by how my book-loving friends reacted to the stress imposed by concern for loved ones far away and their own well-being. Many of us found it too difficult to focus on novels that often had transported us to fictional worlds, while others dropped non-fiction books that smacked of the reality through which we were living.

I thought I would be comforted by voices of writers who were familiar to me – books that I had read over and over because I was moved by the storytelling and the language. So that first week, I unpacked a box of my favorites that would occupy a place in our new home. I re-read *Tender is the Night* – my favorite Fitzgerald; and *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Marquez, after deciding his *Love in the Time of Cholera* was a little too close to the crisis swirling around us; and Le Carre's *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold* – which is a taut and brilliant character study. I stared at Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* – the fattest volume on the bookshelf – but even though I loved to reread it from time to time, I found that I couldn't concentrate on such a dense tale between cycles of news that were essential.

I moved on to Larsen's *The Splendid and The Vile*, pitch-perfect for quarantine – the uplifting story of Churchill's leadership during the early days of WWII when he taught his countrymen “the art of being fearless.” I was so pleased to be on Boca Grande that I was drawn to books by friends and neighbors – Tom Brokaw, Tom McGuane, and Candice Shy Hooper – most pleasant distractions.

On Martha's Vineyard in August and September, counting the days till I returned home in October, I escaped with the crime novels that have always given me pleasure since my father put his own childhood copy of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* in my hands. Daniel Silva's *The Order* was fascinating and fast-paced; Scott Turow writes courtroom thrillers better than anyone, as the *The Last Trial* proved once again; and I've put myself on the library waiting list for Louise Penny's *All the Devils are Here* – something smart with a strong sense of place, as in all her books.

The book from my own series of crime novels that I had the most fun researching was *Lethal Legacy*, set in the magnificent New York Public Library – as grand a building as it is one of the country's greatest resources. I am right in the middle of Fiona Davis' *The Lions of Fifth Avenue* – set in the same iconic venue – and if you miss your library, and our little jewel on Boca Grande, this novel is a wonderful reminder of what awaits you when the doors open wide once again.



Linda Fairstein, a resident of Boca Grande, is the author of the New York Times bestselling series of crime novels featuring Alexandra Cooper. Her books are available at the Johann Fust Library and on Kindle.

What is a Short Story and Why Should You Read One

First, I want to say the short story has nothing to apologize for. It is not the stepchild of the novel. Rather, I believe, it is a sibling of equal standing in the family of literary forms that includes the novel, the novella, and the poem. Alice Munro, a Nobel Laureate who writes nothing but short stories, defended its status when she said, “I would really hope that people would see the short story as an important art, not just something you played around with until you got a good novel.”

So how do you define this small literary gem. Well, there are as many interpretations of what a short story is as there are writers writing them. Aristotle offered his opinion when he described the story as consisting of three components — complication, crisis, and solution.

Edgar Allen Poe, the father of the contemporary short story, echoed, with modification, the Greek philosopher when he said a successful short story should have three requirements. It should be brief enough to be read in a single sitting. It should end simultaneously with the climax of the narrative, and it should feature only a single mood. When someone asked Peter Taylor, a teacher of literary fiction, what a short story was, he gave three answers: “It is a one act play. It is like a poem but without the display. It does the work of a novel in fifteen pages.” Acclaimed fiction writer, Lorrie Moore, simply said, “a story is a noise in the night.”

While there is no one definition that all would agree on, most authors agree on the elements that compelling literary short fiction should possess. These include conflict, a character that changes, clarity of language, a setting with good imagery, and a resolution.

For me, a short story’s beauty lies in its brevity and unity. If properly written, no words are wasted. It deals with only one consciousness. It recounts only one central action and one major change in the life of the protagonist. It strives for a single emotional impact and one understanding. Because it is limited in time and space, the short story must be tight, sharp, economic, and charged.

So why should one read short stories or as Lorrie Moore suggests listen to “a noise in the night?” Of course, the pleasure of escaping one’s own life and immersing yourself in the lives of a story’s characters is reason enough. But there are other ways a story can enrich your life. Scientific research has proven that reading fiction builds empathy, critical thinking, and creativity. It is a way to find out what others believe and in doing so what you believe. So I suggest that if you want to be a more empathic person with a better understanding of the human condition and yourself read a story and enjoy the pleasure of doing so.

Here are collections of short fiction that I have recently read and recommend:

Dear Life by Alice Munro

Cloudbursts by Boca Grande’s Tom McGuane

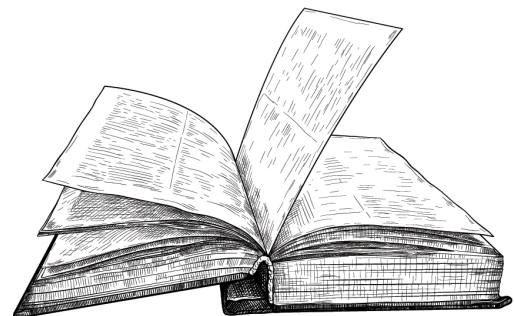
The Tenth of December by George Sanders,

In the Valley by Ron Rash,

Sorry for Your Trouble by Richard Ford,

Redeployment by Philip Kay

The Cactus League by Emily Nemens



The Cactus League

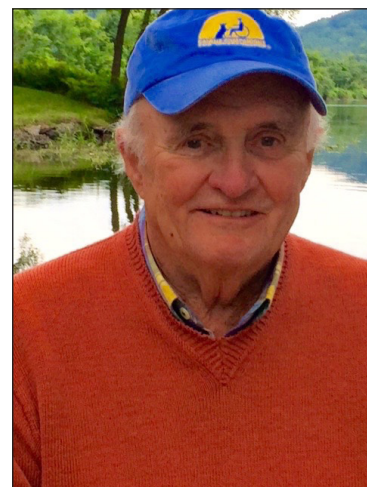
by Emily Nemens

Published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020

The Cactus League, the debut novel by Emily Nemens, editor of "The Paris Review," hums with the zip of a 95 mile an hour fastball, twists and spins like a slider. Although it calls itself a novel, the book is really nine (one for each inning of a game) linked short stories set in Scottsdale, Arizona during the mythical Los Angeles Lion's spring training. But just as a game of baseball is about more than just baseball, *The Cactus League* is about more than what happens on a diamond in the desert. It depicts the rich and complex lives of the players, their families, and the baseball hangers-on, all of whom's fortunes and misfortunes are connected in one way or another to our national pastime.

Nemens' quirky and richly drawn cast includes Jason Goodyear, the Lions power hitting Golden Glove outfielder. Although a league MVP and a superstar on the diamond, off the field, he is an error prone antihero who struggles with a divorce, addiction, financial ruin, and the advances of Tamara, a seductive "cleatcher" who is looking to hit one last home run. Other Cactus Leaguers are a sore arm pitcher addicted to pain pills just trying to make the team, a legendary agent battling old age and Jason's foibles, a batting coach trying to stay relevant in a game that has passed him by, the former jazz pianists with a damaged left hand who plays the stadium organ with light flourishes of his right hand. A highly touted rookie who can't hit a curve or resist Jason's nefarious requests for favors. Then there are players' wives, ex-wives, and girlfriends who hold lingerie parties, vibrators, cocktails called "Desert Suns," and on to their men by a thread. Nemens merges all of these characters' stories into a larger story of love and loss, obsession and survival.

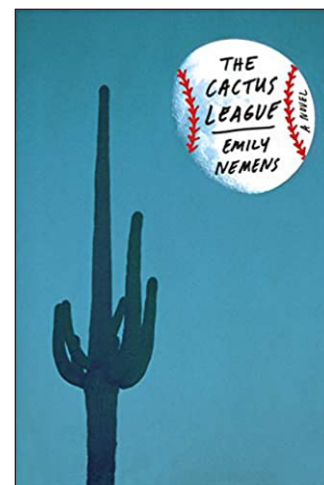
In the summer of corona, when the virus has forced our stadiums to close, the next best things to being in a box at Fenway Park or the bleachers at Wrigley Field with a cold-one and a hot dog, is to read Nemens' humorous and poignant odyssey through the world of spring training baseball. I promise you if you love the game, you are sure to love this book, and if you don't love the game, you may after you read *The Cactus League*.



Daly Walker's new collection of short stories entitled "Resuscitation" is soon to be released. The title story is currently published in "Intima: A Journal of Narrative Medicine."

His short stories have appeared in numerous literary publications, including "The Atlantic Monthly" and the "Saturday Evening Post." They have been shortlisted for "Best American Short Stories," a "Pushcart Prize," and an "O'Henry Award."

Daly teaches a fiction writer's workshop at Dartmouth College in Osher@Dartmouth's summer program.



JULIAN KEEVIL



The Cuckoo

The cuckoo is a lonely bird
Seldom seen but often heard.
In ancient days good Zeus was one
and Hera chased till she was done.
From Shakespeare's day they foretell spring
And tell of love ere matins ring
In Inja its longing and desire
But in Japan love has no fire.
They can be found in countries most
Of which they often seek a host.
They hide an egg among a nest.
With colours matching all the rest.
The poor host bird must feed her now,
To starve some chicks and then allow
The baby bird to grow apace
And head alone to seek a place
Where it can seek another nest
and do what cuckoos do the best.

Julian Keevil was born in London, England. He was graduate of Tonbridge School and attended City of London College and the University of Dijon. He was a lieutenant in the Royal Marine Reserve.

John Thomas recalls, "He was a gifted poet, in the traditional English style, and had a rich baritone voice and excellent delivery." He thoroughly enjoyed the Live Poets Society, which he joined three years ago.

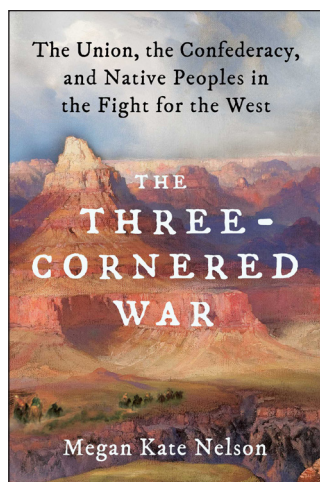
Julian died on September 18, 2020.



Julian Keevil 2020



Candice Shy Hooper is a published poet and the author of "Lincoln's Generals' Wives," which won three national awards. She serves on the Editorial Advisory Board of The Journal of Military History and is a member of the Ulysses S. and Julia D. Grant Historical Home Advisory Board in Detroit, Michigan. She has served on the Board of Directors of President Lincoln's Cottage in Washington, DC, and is past president of the Johann Fust Library Foundation. She is currently working on a book about a Special Agent of the U.S. Post Office who played a vital role in the Civil War and in the fight against the Ku Klux Klan during Reconstruction. It will be published in 2022.



The Three-Cornered War: The Union, the Confederacy, and Native Peoples in the Fight for the West

by Megan Kate Nelson

Published by Scribner, 2019

Close readers of the Civil War – and there are many of us in Boca Grande! – know that the war was as much about the West as it was about the North and South. In 1860, Abraham Lincoln ran on a platform that pledged to allow slavery to remain in the states where it existed but prohibited it from spreading into western territories that would become states. Slaveholders knew that slavery would die if it could not expand, and largely for that reason, seven southern states seceded before Lincoln was inaugurated President in March of 1861, and Confederates attacked Fort Sumter a month later.

But even those of us who know that history are probably not aware that the war was vigorously prosecuted in the West, or that fighting the Confederacy was only one of the U.S. Army's campaigns west of the Mississippi River. The United States also waged war on Native Americans who fought to retain their homelands in the vast expanse of the desert Southwest, as the Union sought to expand its control across the continent.

Megan Kate Nelson, who spoke about the environmental destruction caused by the Civil War at the Boca Grande Civil War Reflections symposium in 2015, has written an enthralling account of those three struggles – Civil War, Indian wars, and Western expansion – in her newest book, *The Three-Cornered War*. One reviewer called it “symphonic,” and indeed, Megan’s deft interweaving of the stories of nine men and women who figured largely in those struggles is a tour de force of history through biography. Of her subjects, she wrote: “Their dreams, fears, flaws, and ambitions were all laid bare as they moved across the brown and scrubby deserts, the tree-covered mountains, and the red rock tablelands of the Southwest. Together, their stories reveal how much the imagined future of the West shaped the Civil War, and how the Civil War became a defining moment in the West.”

Megan Kate Nelson’s research is deep; her writing powerful. Once you have read her book, you will never think of Arizona or New Mexico or the Civil War as you do now. This is an important addition to American history by a thoughtful and gifted historian.

Five Rules for Writers – By Writers: Plus A Bonus Rule by Yours Truly



Photo by Candace Vreeland

Jan Karon is the #1 New York Times bestselling author of fourteen novels in the Mitford series, featuring Episcopal priest Father Tim Kavanagh. She has authored twelve other books, including "Jan Karon's Mitford Cookbook and Kitchen Reader," and several titles for children.

The internet is toxic with rules, nearly always with numerical content. Five Rules for Making Profiteroles to Die For. Ten Rules for Getting Him to Call the Next Day. Fifteen Rules for Turning Your Tiny Apartment into A Roomy Bungalow.

I'm smitten by rules favored by writers, all of whom, of course, play by their own rules. If you're serious (or even semi-) about writing, here are personal favorites that I've gleaned from the work of writers who ought to know.

The Reading Rule: Faulkner said, "Read everything, and see how they do it. Just like a carpenter who works as an apprentice and studies the master, read! You'll absorb it."

Pat Conroy said his family had only two books in their house: *The Bible* and *Gone with the Wind*. He devoured both and no harm done.

In our farmhouse in the foothills of North Carolina, my first experience with actual literature was when my grandmother read the Old Testament to my sister and me. These stories had everything: Poetry. Plagues. Drought. Floods. Fleas. Locusts. Boils. Dancing with tambourines. And the Almighty speaking directly to prophets and even to a young boy on a pallet on the floor. Throw in a burning bush, and what more could we possibly need? But honestly, a dash of *Charlotte's Web* or *Wind in the Willows* wouldn't have hurt.

The Becoming-Your-Characters Rule: Eudora Welty said we must "...enter the mind, heart, and skin of a human being who is not (yourself). Whether this happens to be a man or a woman, old or young, with skin black or white, the primary challenge lies in making the jump."

There's nothing more exhilarating for me than the jump. When I started writing about a short, overweight, diabetic, balding small-town priest, I was gobsmacked, as the Irish say. Could I really get into the skin of this very ordinary man?

As I wrote on, I found that he wasn't ordinary at all. Like the rest of us, he was extraordinary. Fourteen novels, two quote books, and a collection of his sermons and prayers flowed out of Tim Kavanagh's many-layered persona.

The What-You've-Got-To-Be Rule: "You've got to be a good date for the reader," said William Styron.

This may be my favorite writers' rule of all time. Think about it. This is definitely what you must do if you want the reader to call or even text the following day.

Great dialog is essential on a reading date. And to be "great," it must be authentic. Throw out your compulsion to explain everything upfront and/or mimic Henry James. Dialog needs to crackle, throw sparks, be propulsive. One of our jobs is to peel away layers, as with an onion, and we must work like Trojans to make this sort of labor shine. BTW, why do the Trojans get praise for working so hard? My grandmother always gave them this doubtful credit!

Five Rules for Writers (*cont'd*)

BTW, Elmore Leonard had a very strict rule. We must never, ever, under any circumstances, he said, open with weather. I broke that rule, big time. *In the Company of Others*, set in Ireland, opened with a deluge, but I felt not a particle of shame. Weather happens. It just does.

The Sticking-To-It Rule: When writing my first novel, *At Home in Mitford*, the local newspaper editor asked if I would share the pages with his readers via a "column" a week. Like any crazy, out-of-work person, I committed to this dubious honor. Payment was a free weekly copy of "The Blowing Rocket," which at that time sold for 10 cents.

Without a commitment, yes, maybe two or three chapters—but 140,000 words, no. (I eventually peeled away about 20,000 words, out of compassion for whoever may actually read such a tame and hopeful work.)

I find the writing of a book to be intensely rewarding and particularly painful. I despair with Eudora that "these words are too weak, too many, and not enough." I agree with the sportswriter, Red Smith, who said, "There's nothing to it. You just sit down and open a vein."

In any case, it is a devouring process, as it should be. One goes at it with quiet terror, grave innocence, and no little faith. The desperate truth of the matter is that we must do what Flannery O'Connor says: "...tremble with Abraham as he held a knife over Isaac."

In the end, I am forced to follow Nietzsche's simple but rigorously challenging rule:

In order to write a good, bad, or merely indifferent book, any book at all—one must observe, he said, "a long obedience in the same direction."

Amen. And amen.

On What To Do If You Are Too Terrified To Begin: Follow Goethe's rule, which I inscribed with Magic Marker on the wall above my desk when I stepped out on faith and began writing books:

"What you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it."

According to your inclinations, you may straighten pictures on the wall, fluff sofa pillows, and take long walks for your mental health—anything to avoid what must be done.

But if you stick to it, you may surely find, as did Margaret Mitchell, that "in a weak moment, I have written a novel."

My Bonus Rule: People ask, "How do you write a book?" There is usually a very worried look on the face of the person asking this question.

The answer is so simple, it's embarrassing. "Write the first line."

"What shall I say?"

"Say anything at all. It doesn't matter. If you must, simply type in either of the two best first lines in recent history."

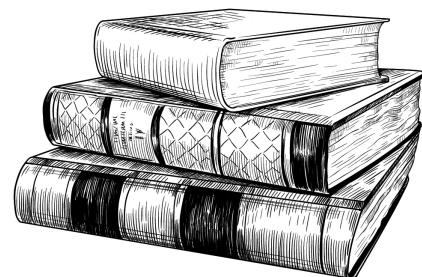
"It was the worst of times. It was the best of times."

Or, if you can't do better, "I had a farm in Africa."

And take it from there.

The first line, and all the rest of it, will resolve itself as you proceed.

I promise.



Coming of Age

Well actually its always coming,
Age that is. When you think on it,
Which hopefully isn't all that often,
Careful, it can be as disorienting
As gazing through another's eyes.

To spot it do you look ahead,
Peek at tomorrow, peer into a cloud?
Pick one coming at you but be aware
Perchance it's just a wistful wisp
Whose promise will mist to maybe,
To better luck next time, to rain.

Or search about your just now –
Antennae all senses lest its sneakiness
Whiff by as touch while we await pain;
Tap on the right as we peer left
Seeking a dream we want to be
In case our real has come too close.

But suppose it passed us on another track
Clickity clacking like our cardiac clock
Too faint, too self conscious to cause count?
Will age come again? Will we come of it again?
Truth tell our past's past is strewn of it.
Our coming of age each tomorrow's promise.

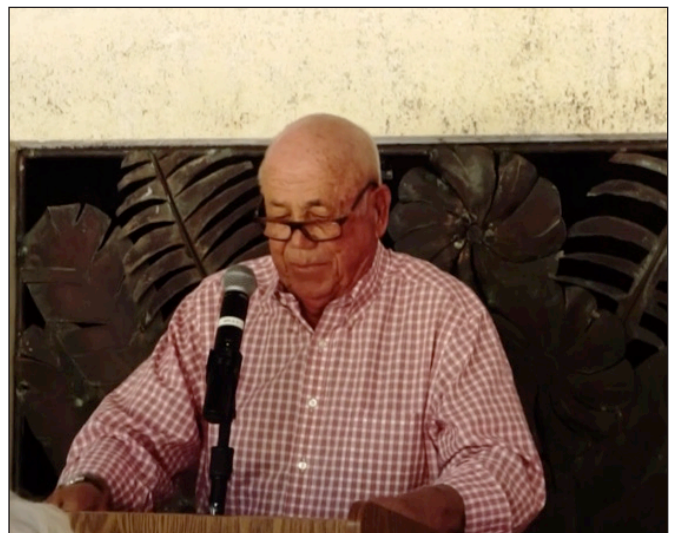
Les Nash
August 2009



Dr. Clyde "Les" Nash, retired orthopaedic surgeon and Professor Emeritus of Case Western Reserve University, began writing poetry as he left the OR and said good-bye to his surgical instruments.

The poetry muse showed up and he moved his mind and hands to the computer or frequently, random scraps of paper. Since the year 2000 he has composed over 300 poems, attended poetry workshops at Amherst College, San Miguel Allende, Palm Beach and been an active member of the Live Poets Society in Boca Grande, Florida. He especially enjoyed listening to and learning from Billy Collins when he visited the island.

Les died in Chagrin Falls, Ohio in September 2019.



The Heart of Midlothian and Old Mortality

by Sir Walter Scott

One of my favorite books is the great 19th century historical novel, *The Betrothed* (*I Promessi Sposi*) by Alessandro Manzoni, but I've had little or no success getting others to try reading it. Family, friends—and many a student!—have been reluctant to love it as I do, so recommending now a novel by the man who more or less created the genre of the historical novel and inspired Manzoni's masterpiece is not a smart move... tant pis, en avant!

Unlike that great Italian who only wrote one novel, Sir Walter Scott poured forth a vast stream of them. *The Waverley Novels* came out from 1814 to 1832, and throughout the 19th century and into the early 20th century they were among the most popular novels in Europe and in America, loved and read and widely imitated by other writers (Manzoni again!). Now these many volumes collect dust on the shelves of secondhand bookshops or serve to decorate chic rooms somewhere in leather-bound sets. But Walter Scott deserves better, and anyone who picks up a copy of *The Heart of Midlothian* or *Old Mortality* say, will be happy to have done so, and will also have lent a hand to keeping this writer's work alive.

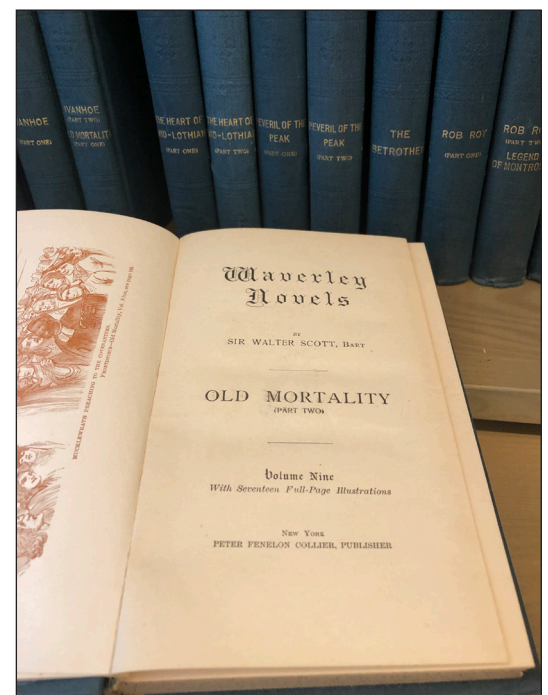
Three features at least strike the reader. Scott knows how to tell a good story, with clarity and suspense and verve, so the pages fairly whirl by. And the story is deeply embedded in history, political and social and religious, so it has weight and seriousness. And the third appealing strength of this novelist is the range of his memorable characters—Jenny Deans and Henry Morton respectively in these two novels—they come from low and high social strata, and their talking is vividly presented (a glossary is provided to help understand the bits in Scottish). Let's add a fourth to these three pleasures: the famous picturesque natural beauties of Scotland which Sir Walter's mastery of the English language very powerfully evokes in setting the stage for his tales. (He is credited with having more or less created the tourism industry of his native land and inspired Victoria and Albert to adopt Balmoral as a royal retreat.)

So there is my rash recommendation for anyone who is looking for something wonderful to read during these long days of waiting for a vaccine, either *The Heart of Midlothian* or *Old Mortality* by Sir Walter Scott, the writer whom John Buchan, he of *The Thirty-nine Steps*, called the greatest story-teller after Shakespeare!

Sir Walter Scott's "Waverley Novels" were donated to the Library Foundation by Jim Grady. They are on the shelf in our rare book collection. Lee County Library System has "The Heart of Midlothian" and "Old Mortality" to lend.



Davis Hammond was born in Boston. He was educated at St. Paul's School and Harvard College where he earned a BA and a Ph.D. He taught Romance Languages and French and Italian Literature, first at Brandeis University, then at Dartmouth College, and ultimately at Exeter Academy. After retiring to Boca Grande, an old family haunt since 1947 (and where he and his wife, Corinna, honeymooned in 1966), he continued to teach at the Pierian Spring Academy and Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at Ringling College in Sarasota. He served on the Board of Directors for the Johann Fust Library Foundation, where he is now a Literary Advisor.



Great Blue Heron

He walks across the lawn
like an elegant old gentleman,
under-tailored in a soft grey
morning suit.

He disappears into mangroves,
white head and black cap above.
With a quiet leap he ascends
to his knobby perch.

For hours his eyes stalk the sea.
At times he stretches his long neck,
shifts from one leg to the other.
There he stays, still and strong.

My silent sentinel.

Lindsay Major



Lindsay Hughes Major was born in Wyoming and raised in Kansas City. Since childhood, she has enjoyed reading and memorizing poetry, but it wasn't until she took post-graduate writing workshops that she began composing her own poetry.

Lindsay and her husband have had a home in Boca Grande for twenty-five years. They have enjoyed sharing it with their three children and grandchildren. Lindsay loves all libraries, but especially the Johann Fust Library. She is a past president of the Johann Fust Library Foundation.

Apeirogon A Novel

by Colum McCann

Published by Random House, 2020



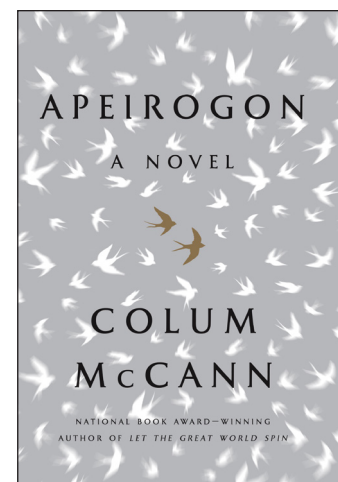
Lucinda is originally from Kentucky. Her mother taught Speech and Drama at Western Kentucky University and was coach of the debate team. Lucinda's early life revolved around the university. She herself went on to the University of Kentucky and graduated from the University of Louisville. She later went to Vermont College where she received her MFA in writing with a focus on fiction.

Lucinda has written a novel entitled "It was the Goodness of the Place," essays and short stories. She also has had an active life as an editor. Currently she is working on a collection of stories including a novella.

Put simply, this is the tale of two men, one a Palestinian Muslim, the other an Israeli Jew, and two little girls, the daughters each man lost to the violence of conflict between their lands. However, this novel is anything but simple. The apt title refers to a geometric shape with a "countably infinite number of sides." From that infinity the author has fashioned a kaleidoscope of glittering language and tragic fragments to reveal a pattern of truth as he turns his story toward the light. To paraphrase Whitman, this novel contains multitudes: a grinding tale of grief; a story of avian migratory routes; the scrupulously reported details of Francois Mitterrand's death after a last meal of Ortolans (tiny birds said "to embody the soul of France"); a treatise on intense friendship as profound as brotherhood; a lush symphony of words in harmony with hope; a spellbinding mix of breathtaking actions and their dangers packed into a literary, political, and emotional rocket aimed at the universe as a soaring prayer for peace.

The book's protagonists, Rami Elhanan and Bassam Aramin, gave the author license to interpret their own inner thoughts after years of penetrating interviews. Thus, it became ...*A Novel*. McCann uses his novelistic skills to bring the living fathers into stark relief and to reanimate their daughters, Smadar and Amir, into joyful, vivid life. Like the birds on the book's silvered jacket cover, their humanity shines.

Colum McCann was in Boca Grande in 2010 to read and speak about his National Book Award winner, *Let the Great World Spin*. Those of you who heard him will remember his Irish accent and metered speech that makes poetry out of "hello." He reads the audio version of *Apeirogon A Novel* in that urgent, melodious voice. I listened, enthralled, through the library App, Libby (installed by helpful Mary Vickers), which has been the sine qua non of my Covid Quarantine defense. In this case, reading may have the advantage in that McCann has modeled his book after the *One Thousand and One Nights* wherein Scheherazade, whose name translates as "world-freer," tells tales to save her life. One perceives the motif more clearly on the page. Whether heard or read, this unforgettable book will pierce your unarmored heart.





A note from the poet: "For as long as I can remember I have had a fascination with words. I approach any occasion to write as a challenge and opportunity for mastery."

Poetry for me is the most exquisite form of writing. It conveys in words the sense of something observed or felt, as painting conveys this visually.

Although I have written poems since early in my life, it is only with the encouragement of the Living Poets of Boca Grande, to whom I am very grateful, that I have begun to share them. Though frightening, this experience has been liberating and a wonderful acknowledgement.

The Old Adirondack Chair

One broad paddle of an arm is dropped down.
The seat is aslant.
The bottom rail is loosed
and lists downward, resting on the ground.
Its appearance is one of past reassurance,
tucked into the sheltering foliage of nearby flora,
slowly aging,
a bit decaying,
a reminder of its once open invitation, now in abeyance,
its long service now earning it a place of respect, to be on view,
not to be moved,
a reminder of old times, all times,
till that too is beyond its reach.

Nancy White



Ragtime in the White House

By Eliot Vestner

Published by City Point Press, 2020

History played a trick on McKinley. He has been consigned to the shadows between Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt, vilified or ignored by historians . . . It is a richly undeserved fate.

As Eliot Vestner demonstrates in this narrative of the political life of William McKinley, there was much more to the twenty-fifth president's tenure in office than history books allow. He was a popular president, winning a second term with ease. But only nine months into it, he was assassinated by a self-described anarchist. What more he might have accomplished is anyone's guess. He had managed to successfully pull America out of one of the worst economic depressions yet experienced, the Panic of 1893. His controversial tariffs strengthened industry and contributed to the overall wealth of the country, as did his return of the country to the gold standard.

He also led the U.S. to victory in the Spanish-American war, and implemented the first steps toward building the Panama Canal, which his successor, Theodore Roosevelt, continued.

Perhaps the most under-appreciated aspect of McKinley's presidency was his advocacy for black civil rights, and his challenge to the white supremacy of the South. As governor of Ohio, he fought against lynching and signed a groundbreaking anti-lynching bill. Ironically, as president, he had a much more difficult time combating violence and racial injustice because of the use of states' rights as justification for voter suppression and terrorism towards blacks. He pursued opportunities to advance the interests of black Americans wherever he could, but his inability to stop the lynchings and disfranchisement of blacks was most regrettable. His successors had no interest in the race issue, which remained unresolved until the 1954 court decision in *Brown v. The Board of Education*.

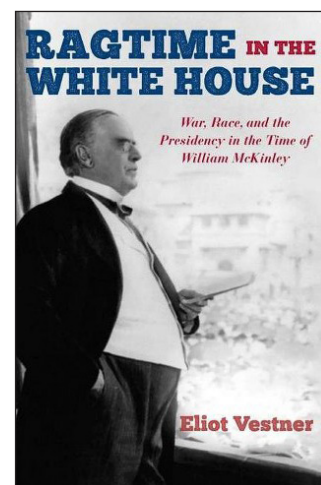
This book gives McKinley his due, and thereby helps us better understand a President of the United States whose work has seemingly been overlooked by most Americans today.

Book Summary by Charlie Vestner, Eliot's Son



Eliot Vestner was an avid student of American history who took up historical writing late in life. He published two books on American history: "Meet Me Under the Clock at Grand Central" (2010) and "Ragtime in the White House" (2020).

Eliot died on July 10, 2020. Quoting from the profile of him written by Marcy Shortuse of the Boca Beacon in June of 2020, "The thing that amazed and inspired him the most, he admitted, was the loyalty that McKinley felt toward the black community, and how it played a huge part in his presidency. When he finished the book, he said it was a great relief. 'I was hoping I would have a chance to finish it, but my cancer left me a very short time, and I wasn't sure I could do it. I did it... I finished it up.'"



SIMONETTA BALZER

The Dream

The dream is gone
leaving no trace,
but a profound,
hopeless,
nostalgia.

Like an orphan,
I lie, still, in the dark,
reaching out to the unknown,
yet unable to retrieve
its impossibly
luminous essence.

Such despair
must have felt
the first man and woman
when they were banished
from the Garden of Eden.

*Simonetta Balzer
Boca Grande
March 2015*



Simona (Simonetta) Balzer was born in Rome, Italy. She received her degree in Classics and Archaeology at the University of Rome. After marrying, she moved to the United States, where she got a PhD in Italian Literature from Rutgers University while teaching undergraduate courses.

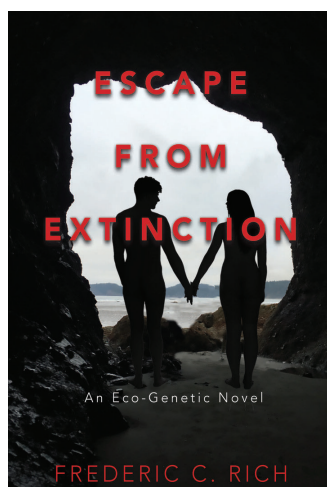
An avid reader in four languages, Simonetta loves narrative and poetry. She joined The Live Poets Society of Boca Grande ten years ago. She is the proud mother of two daughters and grandmother of four. Simona and her husband Giorgio now divide their time between Boca Grande and New Jersey.





As a partner at the New York law firm Sullivan & Cromwell, Fred Rich was recognized as “the pre-eminent project finance lawyer in the world.” And then, in 2014, having reached the peak of his profession, he abruptly announced to his surprised partners and clients that he was switching careers. To banking, perhaps? Politics? No, to be an author. And therein lies a story.

Today, Mr. Rich – who does a two month writing retreat each year here on Gasparilla Island – is an author who says his writing, both fiction and non-fiction, is meant to probe contemporary political and moral issues from a fresh perspective.



Escape from Extinction: An Eco-Genetic Novel

By Fred Rich

Published by Vector Books, 2020

Last year, Chinese geneticist He Jiankui was jailed for creating two genetically modified human babies. Notwithstanding the global outcry over He’s work, Russian molecular biologist Denis Rebrikov announced plans to do the same. In 2007, scientists using the same technology “de-extincted” the Pyrenean Ibex, and major efforts are underway to bring back the woolly mammoth and passenger pigeon. The digital revolution is being overtaken by a genetic one. Scientists wielding new tools for editing DNA now have the power to change the blueprint for humanity, hack evolution, re-engineer nature, resurrect extinct species, and even create entirely new forms of life. We are in what Siddhartha Mukherjee in his bestseller *The Gene* calls “a headlong sprint into an abyss.”

Escape from Extinction uses storytelling to explore this abyss. The main characters are the visionary but narcissistic biotech billionaire Leo, his cloned Neanderthal son Ned, his brilliant and long-suffering wife Polly, his grounded naturalist friend Muir, and Muir’s daughter Lilith, the target of Ned’s affection. The plot: Leo, whose company has already changed the face of medicine and reproduction, creates an environmental utopia in Oregon called Arcadia, recklessly “de-extincts” (yes, that’s a word and a real thing) a Neanderthal, and manages to keep him secret until the boy is 15. When a politically ambitious televangelist exposes his existence, Ned learns of his origins for the first time and struggles with his identity and his relationship with the man he calls father. A tsunami of public fear and hatred threatens Ned’s life and a great flood devastates the engineered harmony of Arcadia. Ned wants Lilith and dreams of resurrecting Neanderthal culture by populating Arcadia with more of his kind. Ultimately, Leo must choose whether to sacrifice everything to protect his son.

Escape from Extinction is not science fiction. The science is real, not speculative. It is an updating of the Prometheus/Frankenstein story for the age of genetics. In Michael Crichton’s 1990 *Jurassic Park*, the intersection of avarice and scientific hubris gave us man-eating velociraptors. In *Escape from Extinction*, the monster is an empathetic and charming Neanderthal boy, who many think presents the same threat to humanity as Crichton’s dinosaurs. The characters and the country grapple with the mystery of Neanderthal extinction, the history of eugenics, and the broader question of whether life, nature, and evolution can or should be brought under human control. In *Frankenstein*, the monster destroys its creator. *Escape from Extinction* raises the question of whether the “monster” might instead have the power to redeem its creator and his species.



Sandy Ross Jacobs grew up in Philadelphia. She attended Overbrook High School, Pennsylvania State University, Temple University and Villanova University for undergraduate and graduate studies.

As a young adult she began to write travel and human interest articles, usually with a touch of humor. Her articles appeared in local, national and international magazines and newspapers.

She describes herself as a “seat-of-the-pants” writer, never having taken a course in writing or content.

Although she never had the desire or patience to write a book, she couldn't resist writing the story of Francie. Her goal was to finish the book before her 80th birthday—five months later, she accomplished her goal.

Francie's Story

By Sandy Jacobs

Published by Amazon and Barnes & Noble, 2020

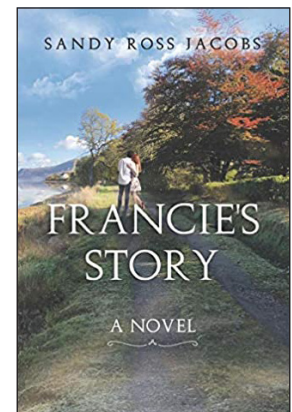
On the ferry to Edinburgh to begin her freshman year of college, Francie, an Irish girl from Dublin, meets a young man. As often happens with young people away from home for the first time, they fall in love. What follows is an unpredictable story of three loves in a decades-long saga that takes its cast of characters through Dublin, Scotland, London, Philadelphia, Tipperary and Tuscany.

The story of Francie's life could be the life of anyone who has known the complications of family relationships, romantic liaisons, and a successful career while trying not to lose their true identity.

A note from the author:

Dear Reader,

Let me tell a little secret. I didn't know Francie until I wrote this story. One night while I was between wakefulness and sleep, Francie came to me out of nowhere. I had no idea who she was, but she said that she wanted me to write her story. I ignored her—in fact, I ignored her for a long while. But she kept coming to me at night. When she pushed her way into my life in broad daylight, I gave in and opened a new file in my computer. I called it 'Francie's Story' and the words poured out. Francie continued to visit me, mostly at night, and I raced to my computer every morning to capture her. For six months, she was my best friend, and then her visits became shorter and farther apart. She wanted to prepare me for her departure. I miss her now that she's gone from my life, but the lesson she came with lingers: Every life is a story and it's up each of us to fill in the details. I did it for Francie and now I'm doing it for myself.

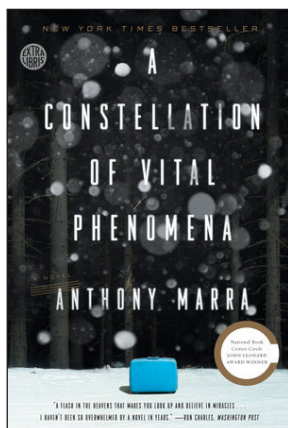




Karen and Jim Grace moved to Boca Grande in 1990. They owned the Temptation Restaurant for 24 years. Both had visited Florida often as children but thought that the undeveloped Florida of the 50's and 60's was gone until they visited Gasparilla island in the mid-1970's. It was love at first sight and they were frequent visitors until their move.

Pre-Boca Grande, the couple lived in Lakewood Ohio where Karen worked for several Cleveland corporations primarily in marketing. Before moving to Florida, she was Vice President-Sales and Marketing of an American Greetings licensing subsidiary called Those Characters From Cleveland

Currently the Graces divide their time between Boca Grande and Red Lodge, Montana.



A Constellation of Vital Phenomena

By Anthony Marra

Published by Hogarth, 2013

This novel set in Chechnya during the conflicts of the mid 1990's through the mid 2000's weaves together the stories of three major characters and many secondary ones with a palpable tension throughout and ultimately a satisfying ending. A word of caution, this is a novel about what happens in war (it includes torture) so it is sometimes graphic.

Akhmed lives in the forest near Eldar where he cares for his wife who suffers from premature dementia. He went to medical school, graduating in the bottom four percent of his class and, unable to secure a residency, now treats some of his neighbors who include an informer to the Russians and an elderly man who has been writing a several thousand page history of Chechnya for years. Akhmed is a better portraitist than a physician and draws portraits of the many people who have disappeared during the wars and hangs them in the trees of the forest.

When the book opens, Akhmed watches as his neighbor Dokka's house is burned by Russian Federal troops. He then rescues Dokka's young daughter, Havaa, and takes her to a hospital where he promises to help the resident physician/surgeon, in exchange for a safe place for Havaa. Sonja is an ethnic Russian whose family settled in Chechnya after World War II to replace many Chechens who had been deported. Trained as a surgeon in London and almost married there, Sonja returns and is reunited with her sister Natasha who, earlier in the war, had been sent to Italy as a victim of sex trafficking. The two sisters work together in the hospital until Natasha disappears once again.

Havaa, the eight-year-old girl Akhmed saves, is strangely sought by the Feds. Therefore, the need for a safe place like the hospital. She will grow up under the protection of Sonja and ultimately share with her the contents of her suitcase of souvenirs from the people who once sheltered in Dokka's house but have since disappeared. In its own way, this will reunite Sonja with Natasha. Havaa's progress through life is uplifting in a book which, though grim, depends on hope.

The author spent time in Eastern Europe researching the history of the war period in Chechnya and brings great reality in his descriptions of war-torn towns and people. The title comes from one of Sonja's medical books. "Life: a constellation of vital phenomena – organization, irritability, movement, growth, reproduction, adaptation."

Regeneration

Do Roses frown?
No, they always greet us
with smiles and beaming faces
as they hail the day,
Gladly.

Do they, or the moon, complain
as they wane?
No, they accept the cycle
that is life,
Gladly,
knowing that the new moon
and the germinating seed,
like the promise of spring,
bring renewal.

All nature rejoices
in its being,
cycle after cycle,
breath by breath,
be it in beauty,
or decay.

And so we in our
earthly sojourn
can be alive
to each moment
in its immediacy,
neither regretting
the past,
nor fearing
the future.

John Thomas



John H Thomas was born in Wales, U.K. and spent a 40-year career with Wedgwood, the British ceramic manufacturer in the U.S., England, Canada, Asia and Australia.

He and his wife Claudia live in Boca Grande FL. He enjoys singing with Grande Glee, is an avid reader of history and poetry and is a keen, but frustrated golfer.



The King At The Edge Of The World

by Arthur Phillips

Published by Penguin Random House 2019

Good authors of historical fiction have the ability to report history accurately, and interweave it with imagined characters and events that bring it to life. Hilary Mantel and George Cornwell are prime exemplars.

Arthur Phillips has chosen The Elizabethan Period, (1558-1603) a critical time in English history, for his novel. Elizabeth I is dying and the question of her succession remains unresolved. James VI of Scotland has clear claim to the throne. His mother Mary Queen of Scots was next in line to succeed Elizabeth, but Elizabeth had her executed because of her Catholic religion and its relationships in Europe, as well as her intrigue against the crown.

Queen Mary, who preceded Elizabeth I, was a Catholic who persecuted Protestants, burning 300 at the stake. Elizabeth did not respond in kind by killing Catholics ; she tried instead to steer a middle ground that precluded persecution, but prohibited any relationships with Catholic foreign powers and agents.

There was a great fear among the English rulers that James VI might be a secret Catholic, despite his Calvinist upbringing. Phillips's story tells how Sir Francis Walsingham, head of the Queen's Secret Service, and William Cecil, the Queen's closest advisor, set about establishing the truth.

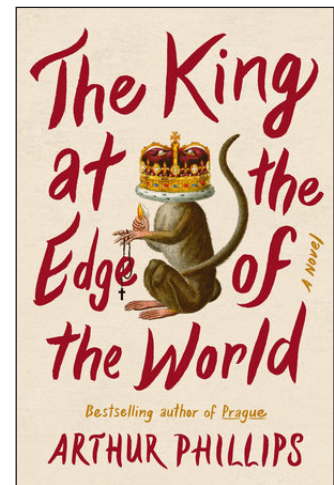
The book begins with the arrival in London of the Turkish Ambassador and his entourage, including a distinguished Muslim doctor. Queen Elizabeth was anxious to make a treaty with Turkey against her enemies France, Spain and the Pope, and the Turkish Mission was there for that purpose.

In a cleverly contrived narrative, worthy of a Shakespearean play, Phillips takes us into the courts of Elizabeth in London, and James VI in Scotland, with epic descriptions of life in both cities. The plague is raging in London and corpses are stacked up like cordwood in the streets, which are putrid with filth and rubbish. Mahoud Ezzedine, the Muslim doctor is appalled at conditions after the purity and tranquility of the Sultan's, Palace of Felicity, in Constantinople.

The story unfolds with the doctor being marooned in England, attending Queen Elizabeth, converting to the Christian faith, changing his name to Matthew Thatcher, and becoming an agent of the English Government. His handler is Geoffrey Belloc, aka David Leveret, a redoubtable character of brutal strength and Protestant determination.

James VI is revealed as an odd, dysfunctional man, fascinated by witchcraft, hunting, and pretty young men.

Events mount to a surprising and meaningful ending when James VI of Scotland's Protestant faith is clearly established, and the question of succession is resolved. Phillips gives insight into Elizabethan England with all its intrigues and cross-currents, as well as the coarser contrasts of Edinburgh and James VI's court.



What Carlos Knew

By David Sparks

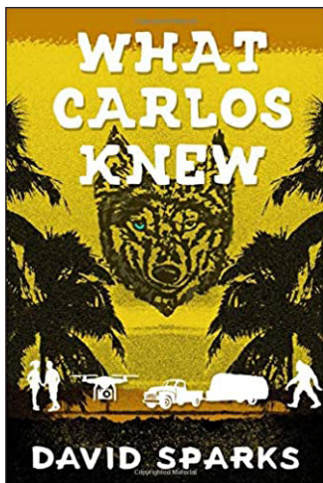
Published by Amazon 2020

Samantha (Sam) Grainger and her boyfriend Wendell Wolf have just graduated from high school and are off to see Sam's grandmother. From there, it gets a little strange. Sam believes she's a Calusa Indian, Sam's grandmother is the chief of the Calusa tribe on an island in the Everglades and the island's being taken over by a bizarre religious cult.

Sam and Wendell swing into action with the help of a geriatric motorcycle gang, a women's drone club and a bucket of concentrated dope oil. Oh, and Carlos, a wise little dog who gets his mojo from sipping at the fabled Fountain of Youth.

If this isn't enough, Sam and Wendell are having problems. Wendell's not cutting it as a boyfriend. He's bossy and he just can't seem to do anything for himself. Sam wonders if they'd be better best friends instead of boyfriend-girlfriend, but she's going to try to set Wendell right.

Exciting, romantic, funny and magical, *What Carlos Knew* is a delight for all age readers.

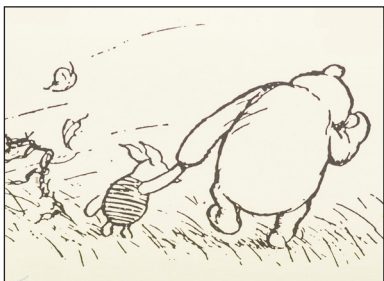


David Sparks was raised in Illinois and Massachusetts. He graduated magna cum laude from Tufts University and received a Master of Public Administration degree from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Sparks also was a Fellow at the Institute of Politics at the Kennedy School.

Sparks's career included a variety of local, state and national political and public sector positions. He had senior roles on three presidential campaigns. He was also Executive Director of the Collins Center for Public Management at the McCormack Graduate School of Policy Studies at UMass Boston.

Sparks divides his time between Florida and Maine. He has a daughter, Grace, who lives in Washington, DC and works for CNN.

After his first career, Sparks turned to writing fiction. "Built to Fail" was published in 2017. "Burying Pinkie Pie" was published in 2018. His third novel, a sequel to "Burying Pinkie Pie," is called "What Carlos Knew." It was published in 2020.



*Where are we going, Pooh?
Home, Piglet. We're going home
because that's the best thing to do right now.*
A. A. Milne

When we closed for COVID-19 in March, the Lee County Library System immediately began reimagining library service. Due dates were extended, online library card registration was expedited and staff presented online story times. In May, access to physical library materials via contactless curbside pickup began. In June and July, children, teens and adults participated in online summer reading program activities and presentations. Ebooks, audiobooks, music and movies were added enhancing our outstanding digital collection. In October, we hosted a virtual *Fandom Fest* with presentations, story times, interactive trivia, virtual escape rooms, an online reading challenge, anime art gallery, costume contest and prizes.

We opened the library doors the first week in October. Our new hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10 to 4. Curbside service is also available during those hours. Physical items can be reserved on <https://libpac.leegov.com/>. Need a suggestion? Sign up for some staff recommended newsletters at <https://www.leegov.com/library/books>. Use the plethora of digital content via <https://www.leegov.com/library/online>. These resources are available all day, every day, from anywhere with internet access. ValueLine, Consumer Reports, Ancestry.com, Rosetta Stone and thousands of magazine articles are some of the resources available. My favorite resource is Hoopla. I downloaded the Hoopla app to my smartphone and smart TV so I can enjoy music, television shows, ebooks, audiobooks and movies anytime. Mary Vickers' favorite library app is Libby with more than 90,000 ebooks and 27,000 audiobooks. Read or listen on your computer, Kindle, iPad or smart phone or enjoy them in your car with a Bluetooth connection. Want to read *The Economist*, *The New Yorker*, *Bon Appetit* or 223 other magazines? Watch British comedies on Acorn TV? You can do both with our RBDigital app. We look forward seeing you in the library, online and curbside. Assistance is just a call away. Thank you for your support and resiliency in this unusual time. Stay safe and be well.



Toni Vanover, shown here in the Children's Room at the Johann Fust Community Library, is Senior Librarian and Branch Manager for the Lee County Library System.

Toni Vanover

Senior Librarian/Branch Manager

Library

TUESDAY - SATURDAY
10 AM TO 4 PM
(941) 964-2488

FOUNDATION

MONDAY - FRIDAY
9 AM TO 4 PM
(941) 964-0211

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P.O. Box 309 , Boca Grande, FL 33921

(941) 964-0211 www.JFLFBG.org JFLibraryFoundation@comcast.net