

Our Literary Losses

During the past 12 months, we've seen what seemed to be a disproportionate number of notable literary deaths, and with the death in January of John Updike, the essayist and novelist most famous for his "Rabbit" novels about the life of Harry "Rabbit" Angstrom (starting with 1960's Rabbit, Run), this year may continue the trend. More than 30 of his books can be found in the BCPL collection.

Margaret Truman Daniel, the daughter of President Harry Truman, who wrote memoirs about her father, and a series of mysteries under her maiden name about murders at various Washington, D.C. locations, died at the end of January of last year. Bartholomew County Public Library has her popular mysteries in book and audio book form and a couple of her memoirs as well.

Noted Reagan-era pundit William F. Buckley, Jr., known for his conservative politics and erudite vocabulary, died February 27. Founder of the National Review and longtime Firing Line host, Buckley wrote extensively, both fiction and nonfiction. We have several of his novels, memoirs, and works of history. Buckley was the father of Thank You for Smoking author and essayist Christopher Buckley.

In March of last year, we lost legendary science fiction author and essayist Arthur C. Clarke. Clarke is probably most famous for writing the short story "The Sentinel," the basis for the movie 2001: A Space Odyssey. Clarke also wrote the novel of 2001 (based on the movie), and three longer sequels, 2010, 2061, and 3001. The library has all four books in the 2001 series, as well as Childhood's End, perhaps his second-most-famous work, and Clarke's volume of science and technology essays, Greetings, Carbon-Based Bipeds!. We also have several of his fiction and nonfiction writings in both DVD and VHS.

Perhaps the saddest of the deaths was novelist, short story writer, and essayist David Foster Wallace's apparent suicide in September. Unlike the others on this list, who each lived a long life, Wallace was 46 when he died. He was most famous for his novel Infinite Jest. The library has his nonfiction book on infinity, Everything and More.

Finally for last year, mystery novelist Tony Hillerman, author of the "Leaphorn and Chee" series, died in October. Hillerman also wrote a memoir, Seldom Disappointed, and a children's book, Buster Mesquite's Cowboy Band, which are in the library collection, along with his mysteries which also are available in audio book format..

Let's hope that 2009 turns out better for the literary world, Meanwhile, I encourage you to look into some of these departed writers.

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