

## So Many Books, So Little Time

In late June, I had a week off, vacationing at home. My intention was to work hard in the garden early in the morning, swim with the Donner Masters at noon, then read the rest of the day. I am catching up on a lifetime of adult literature deprivation, having been a middle school librarian most of my career, compelled to read books meant for juveniles. Late in life, I returned to public librarianship almost a blank page, as far as adult fiction is concerned. You could recommend more fiction titles to me than I to you. However, in the last year and a half, I have ploughed through quite a few. Some, frankly, are not worth mentioning. I personally enjoyed *The Associate*, by John Grisham, and *The Gate House*, by Nelson DeMille, and *Wicked Prey*, by John Sanford.

If you like "Christian romance" or westerns or vampire horror, stay away from these titles. But don't stay away from the library, because we have plenty of books for you, too. My vacation fiction read was *Fatally Flaky*, by Diana Mott Davidson...not one of her best. She writes about a caterer/detective and always throws in succulent recipes so that the reader can actually make the food the heroine caters. Your mouth will water as you read, and if you don't put the book down and start cooking, you won't gain an ounce!

As an integral part of an Alzheimer's prevent defense, my strategy has been to alternate reading new, non-fiction books in between the reading-for-pleasure sort. I was astonished to find I enjoyed them. Early this year, I made myself read books about the economy. I carefully chose a small one, *The Return of Depression Economics and the Crisis of 2008*, by Paul Krugman, a professor at Princeton, centenary professor at The London School of Economics, winner of the 2008 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economics, Op-Ed columnist for the New York Times and now on TV a lot when they need someone to explain what's going on. As Barack Obama began his presidency, I'd heard about how his situation compared to that of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, so I read *Nothing to Fear, FDR's Inner Circle and the Hundred Days that Created Modern America*, by Adam Cohen. There is a correlation.

All of that prompted me to read one of this year's top 10 biographies, *The Woman Behind the New Deal: the Life of Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labor and Her Moral Conscience*, by Kirstin Downey. Frances was the person responsible for the minimum wage law, unemployment insurance, getting rid of child labor, and other revolutionary ideas that developed the beginnings of a safety net for the working poor in our country. Think of it: a woman in the 1930's! She gave me courage to take on Ann Coulter's *Guilty: Liberal "Victims" and their Assault on America*. Hair on fire, I next read *Jesus Was a Liberal: Reclaiming Christianity for All*, by Rev. Scotty McLennan.

When I told my brother Jon what I'd been reading, he suggested I read *Liberty and Tyranny: a Conservative Manifesto*, by Mark R. Levin. So I've been covering the waterfront, trying to keep an open mind. It is my observation that not many do. Again, our library has titles across the political spectrum. It was my goal not to get stuck on just one section of those shelves. Similarly, a steady diet of listening to AM radio's Rush Limbaugh or watching MSNBC's Keith Olbermann/*Countdown* or the like - can result in arrogant thinking, "You don't share my world view, so you're evil." Whatever happened to *I'm Okay, You're Okay?* Don't get me started.

By mid July, I'd read a book with a totally different tone, *The Outliers: the Story of Success*, by Malcolm Gladwell. Among other things, the author's research showed that most successful people (from pro athletes to musicians to computer gurus like Bill Gates) reflect about 10,000 hours of working at what they love from childhood on. No wonder I

never made it as a ballerina or concert pianist. I also read *The End of Overeating*, by David Kessler, M.D. Both were fascinating, and the bonus is I am eating a lot differently after finishing that last one.

Any of these titles would be terrific in a book discussion setting. By the time you read this, my hope is that I will have had another week's vacation... this time with my extended family on a lake up in Michigan, reading Anne Rivers Siddons's *Off Season*, out on the end of the dock. It doesn't get any better than that.

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