

Bibliophile

I love books! I feast on them. I devour them for breakfast, and still have twenty-three hours left to sample more or squeeze in another read. Sometimes I go for days (and nights), barely coming up for air. I attract books...titles mentioned by friends, in websites, on Oprah. I peruse the NY Times Bestseller list, and some reach right out and grab me. Trips to the library to return books only leave me leaving with armloads of new covers. I always think I'm stopping at Borders just for a cappuccino and a wander, but I leave with at least a couple books, plus magazines. And, oh dear, I have to pass by the book section at Costco just to check out. Then there's Amazon, where I can graze midday or midnight, always picking up a few...to save on shipping.

I love poetry: haiku, classics and slams, beat poetry, Shakespearean sonnets, e e comings, Rumi, Basho, Emerson, Dickinson, Edna St. Vincent Millay. All poetry lights my fire. And inspires my own lines, a little iambic pentameter here, an ode or two there. I moved two years ago, ending up in Haiku, Maui. It's appropriate, sweetly appropriate, that I live in a Japanese poem.

*A sun dappled dawn
Horizons of green and blue
Waterspouts and whales*

Novels have sustained me since sitting on my Dad's lap, enjoying a good tale. Ibsen, Hemmingway, Steinbeck, Grisham, Rowling...so many authors have thrilled me with a great stories. Heroes and heroines, crises and resolutions. The page burners, late night sessions, obsessions with stories too good to put down. I cut my teeth on the classics in school, foreshadowing a basic diet of novels ever since.

Chick lit is a new love...when meatier fare simply won't do. Paperbacks for beach reading or tucked down between the front seats of my Chevy Tracker for anticipated wait time. Somehow I never allowed myself light writing, romance novels, stories that weren't serious, having been so serious myself. Now when I have moments, I even take pen to paper and write in this genre. Sometimes it's true: Girls just wanna have fun!

My daughter, Julie, got me started on biographies. She loved the oldies: Ava, Marilyn, Bogie...drama queens, all dressed up in hardback. Whenever I visited my grandkids, I would indulge in someone else's story for a while, reading late at night after the house went quiet. Famous people with serious and profound lives have always intrigued me. Ghandi, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Leonardo Da Vinci. What is more profound than a life well lived? Just this month I read four: Queen Noor, Jane, Hilary, Goldie, all contemporaries...then passed them along to Julie for her collection.

A major part of my life was spent reading business books. Drucker was my guru. I studied *International Economics*, *Japanese methods for productivity and quality*, *The Art of Project Management*, *Growing a Business*, I learned *The Art of the Deal*, how to *Manage Intuitively* and *Swim with the Sharks*. *Managing by Numbers*, I took the *9 Steps to Financial Freedom*, heck, I took hundreds. Great chunks of useful information can be found in books. I have started, steered and sold companies based on ideas and philosophies sparked by books. And profits from these companies allowed for a life rich in books.

Working for years in the South Pacific, I grew to love island tales and island authors: Robert Lewis Stevenson, Mark Twain, Paul Theroux, tales of adventure beyond borders and shores, the roads less traveled...islands. For generations travelers have been drawn to their wild mountains, their sexy shores. Islands, like other adventures, provide exterior and interior exploration. Each of us has our own *Lord of the Flies*, *Mutiny*, *Island to Oneself*, our own *Bali Hai*. Captain Cook, Herman Melville, Jack London, James Michener, Gauguin, Frisbee, Forbes, Brando, Branson ...all have heard the siren's call, experienced the pure magic of islands. And in the company of greats, I have too.

I faced a serious diagnosis one year and consumed everything on cancer and health for the next several years. Technical medical journals led me to Deepak, the Mayo Clinic to Louise Hay. Macrobiotics helped me run on different fuel while I figured out how to listen and release and make choices that allowed me to heal. I think, thanks to healing books, I run still. And if *Laughter Is The Best Medicine*, then sometimes nothing beats a book of silly humor, the kind you run into in the guest bathroom while partying with friends. Books that make your sides split, make you pee in your pants, laugh til it hurts, guffaw til spent...these are must reads for every body.

Recently I've become a political junkie, hungry for tomes that rage against the opponents, expose the culprits, support my beliefs in how the world is or should be. They make me hungry for the fight, for justice, for love of country. *This Just In*, *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy* has been *Bushwhacked* by the *Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them*. *Who Let the Dogs In* anyway? And is there *No Future Without Forgiveness* when *Seeds of Deception* abound and *The World is Flat*? We need a *Plan of Attack*, *A Long Walk to Freedom*, *The Voice of Hope*.

I spent many years in the self-help section. They seemed to solve some crisis of the day from baby books, Drs. Spock and Seuss, to all the others offering help along the way. I survived my teenagers with therapy and self-help books. I pondered my own self-worth, why I'm single, how to get fit, where to shop, when to stop. I've learned from pundits and teachers, gurus and moms. I've had such a steady diet of these for years, I must be cured of everything by now.

Like self-help, diet books have filled my shelves over the years, and they've been helpful, but always get buried behind the newest gourmet pictorial. Yes, I indulge still in cookbooks. Lord knows I don't need them. But beyond having owned a restaurant, raised a chef son, and done a fair bit of cooking, gourmet and otherwise, over the years I have discovered that cooking is my second love, after reading. Even though its rare to find a new recipe, I scour them for the faintest hint of a new twist on the old...and for those gorgeous photographs. They inspire me...and keep me humble. Some afternoons they provide just the pick me up to create the perfect appetizer or to call friends for a dinner party of epic proportions. Cookbooks encourage me to light the candle at my kitchen shrine and enjoy the fire of yet another passion.

My spirits also lift when strolling through the spiritual section...or lying in bed in the early morning, reaching deeply within as I stroll past paragraphs, stopping for contemplation. I am a student of Buddhism, Christianity, Sufism, Taoism, Goddess lore, and more. I was raised on The Bible, found my way in *A Path With Heart*. found *Everyday Grace* to go be beyond *The Places That Scare You*. When *Things Fall Apart* I study *A Course in Miracles*, chant the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. *Wherever You Go, There You Are* rings true to seekers. *Be Here Now*, tattered and

earmarked, reminds me how to live reverently and in the present. Many inspirational books have filled my bookshelves and satisfied my soul.

Michelin guides, Frommer's, Lonely Planets have all made their way into my suitcases, backpacks, beach bags. Searching for that monastery in Venice (where monks serve cappuccino and chocolate croissants), the perfect yacht broker for a sailing charter in Greece, a wine trail in New Zealand, a cooking class in Chang Mai, I have nourished my wanderlust soul with travel books, usually found my way off the beaten path to the road less traveled.

Occasionally I feast on histories, or deeper works like Hawking's *Brief History of Time*. Einstein, Planck, Sagan, Heisenberg, quantum mechanics, string theory...physics and scientists intrigue me and turn me on. It's not enough that a body gets on a treadmill and pumps iron; it must also read books to exercise the brain. Mental cool downs can be art books, with their lovely four-color spreads, or large coffee table books where photographs shine and illumine. Children's books too have learned the secrets of pictures...and characters that engage. I still remember, generations later, Little Eaglefeather and his feats. I remember my two-year old turning the pages of *Where the Wild Things Are*, reciting every word. I knew it was only his memory, but his grandma thought he could read already and therefore must be a genius.

Some of my best gifts, given and received, have been books...or gift certificates for bookstores, the big brands, where a lazy morning can fill quite remarkably or small corner shops where little treasures await discovery. Shopping for books is almost as fulfilling as reading them.

And who can resist a 25-cent book? Some of my favorite books found me...at garage sales, library clearances, fundraisers, church and school bazaars. Sales make surprising choices. Books I might never have run into otherwise, I can nibble on, sample. More than a few of those have reached into my gut...and heart.

And I have sold a few books of my own at garage sales. Moves and relocations prompted eliminating sizeable collections, and I have moved a lot. I've also given them away in box loads to libraries, friends, and organizations. Only to relocate and refill a new home over time with books, glorious books.

I love writer's books, the how to's of putting words together: Natalie Goldberg, Julia Cameron, Alice Walker, Oriah Mountain Dreamer. Women encourage the writer in me. Their books teach and inspire. They play coach, getting me up off the bench, back in the game. They pick me up and cheer me on. And remind me, always, of the sheer beauty of words, of paragraphs and pages, of a life spent writing.

Is it a love affair I have with words, or with characters, feelings, ideas? I do not know, but I love books. I love their feel, their smell (new ink, old and musky), the story, the jacket, authors with lives as interesting as their characters. Early mornings, sunny afternoons and sleepless nights fly by while I read. I am nourished by books. Whether the basic food groups or the little sweets and treats, books are my soul food, adding wisdom, adventure, inspiration. And sometimes a girl just wants to have fun.