

Family Book Shop Newsletter August 2009

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"A bookstore is one of the only pieces of evidence we have that people are still thinking." -Jerry Seinfeld

Hello Wordpeople,

I have to ask you again to go to youtube and type in "mom song with lyrics"...in case you ignored the last time I suggested it. It is way too funny for you to ignore. Even Savannah at 15 had to laugh and I think kids as young as 6, as well as any adult, will appreciate the sentiments.

On September 5th we're donating 10% of our gross income to the Avon Walk for Breast Cancer. We've had a jar on the counter for the last few weeks and have collected almost \$300.00. Way to go bookpeople!

Now to books:

Amanda read Jeaniene Frost's **Halfway to the Grave**, **One Foot In the Grave** and **Grave's End**, liking them all. The fourth one, **Destined for an Early Grave**, not so much. It was "ok." There it is again, "damned with faint praise."

When we got the advance of Gena Showalter's new book, **Darkest Whisper**, due in December I thought she was going to cry! I'm not supposed to tell you we have it for fear there'll be a stampede!!

She's been home with a bad back most of the week so has probably read a great many books. Stacy has been sick most of the week too and I was out of the state for 5 days. Kelli has held the fort with just Lori and Mel and looks about 3 inches shorter.

Dylan, Amanda's daughter, is reading **Wake** by Lisa McMann and **City of Bones**, the first in the very popular **Mortal Instruments** series by Cassandra Clare. They call these juvenile fiction or young adult novels but they are enormously popular with both teens and parents.

Lori is reading **Mayflower: A Story of Courage, Community, and War** by Nathaniel Philbrick (The startling story of the Plymouth Colony) to her mother who has recently had a stroke. She says it's slow going because her mother falls asleep after a few pages. For herself she is reading **The Messianic Legacy** by Michael Baigent (The authors of the bestselling Holy Blood, Holy Grail continue their controversial exploration of the Messiah in this fascinating and enlightening book for anyone interested in religion, history, and the complex problems of today's world.)

Kelli has surprised herself by leaving young adult fantasy and reading Tracy Kidder's **Strength in What Remains** (The Pulitzer Prize-winning author of the modern classics "Mountains Beyond Mountains" and "The Soul of a New Machine" returns with the extraordinary true story of a young man and his will to turn his life into something truly remarkable.) due to be out this month, and thoroughly enjoying reading "something with redeeming value."

She asked me to again recommend **The Hunger Games** by Suzanne Collins as well as the sequel, **Catching Fire**. She talked a young customer into buying it and the mom called to say she read it and raved about it to.

I'm reading **Spooner** by Peter Dexter, author of **Paris Trout**, due out the end of September in hardback. I can easily recommend it and will be glad to finish it WHEN I FIND WHERE I PUT IT. I'm also reading **Fire** by Katherine Neville the sequel to **Eight** which was a real surprise. Both are as intriguing in the way **Davinci Code** and Ludlum's books are...complex without being confusing. She's one of those authors that make me wonder why everyone hasn't read her.

I listen to tapes alot...in my car, on the treadmill and when I vacuum, biannually. I finished **Journey** by Danielle Steel, a great telling of the life of

an abuser and the abused. It made me angry, in a good way.

and this from a member of the bookclub I belong to:

sorry to have missed the club wed nite. never got to the "grapes" [Grapes of Wrath] as I had my nose glued to a really great book. Author Bryce Courtenay, writes about Australia, fiction. The title of this (first one) is "The Potato Factory" A trilogy. Can't wait to read the next one. This one is the story of a pickpocket and a whore that get shipped out of England and their lives etc. I love reading about the early history of either U.S. or Australia, anywhere actually as long as it is written as fiction.

and another:

Oh, thank you, thank you!!!! I can't wait to check it out and BTW this advanced copy book you let me borrow, **The Help**, promises to be among the best books I've ever read. Fabulous characters, a social statement that reaches into the depths of the soul, funny, sad. This WILL be a big Oprah recommendation I'll bet. I think you will love it. Can't say enough good things about it!!!!

The Help by Kathryn Stockett might be my favorite too. It's still hardback but well worth the money. (In Jackson, Mississippi, in 1962, there are lines that are not crossed. With the civil rights movement exploding all around them, three women start a movement of their own, forever changing a town and the way women--black and white, mothers and daughters--view one another.)

Independent Store Soapbox...

Both Kelli and Amanda have been to the pet store, Animalia, downtown and been very pleasantly surprised. It's definitely a mom and pop business and includes a young daughter who helps out. We make a real effort to patronize independent businesses.

...end soapbox

Harry has been vindicated..." While some religious groups, including the Catholic Church, have condemned Harry Potter's depiction of wizardry as incompatible with their beliefs, the Vatican has altered its view since the release of **Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince**. Variety reported that "in a review headlined 'Magic is No Longer a Surprising Trick,' the Vatican's official daily newspaper L'Osservatore Romano gave the pic its seal of approval, noting that Harry 'is aware that the world of magic, which he grew up with in the past, is not exempt from malice.' It praised the pic for promoting 'friendship, altruism, loyalty and self-giving.'

Very sad news. Frank McCourt, author of the memoirs **Angela's Ashes**, **'Tis** and **Teacher Man**, died at 78 in New York City.

"We remember him fondly for his comments at the publication party for Teacher Man, when, with his usual deadpan delivery, he lamented that the fame and fortune that came with Angela's Ashes hadn't come earlier in his life, but then said that had this occurred, he would have died long earlier "from drink and fornication."

Also passing was E. Lynn Harris, 54, whose most recent book is **Basketball Jones**. "E. Lynn Harris has wowed and seduced more than three million readers with the wicked drama and undeniable heart in his novels. Now he's back with another winner sure to top the bestseller lists—a rip-roaring tale of sex, secrets, betrayal . . . and blackmail. "

And David Eddings, very popular science fiction/fantasy writer has also died. His best known series were Belgariad and Malloreon

Then there's Farrah, Walter and Michael.

I count my blessings.

I enjoy reading the following articles from Shelf Awareness <http://www.shelf-awareness.com> because they makes some of the authors seem more real

Book Brahmin: Suzanne Brockmann

Suzanne Brockmann has written more than 40 books and is one of the leading voices in romantic suspense. Her work has won many awards, including Romance Writers of America's #1 Favorite Book of the Year three years running, two RITA Awards and many Romantic Times Reviewer's Choice Awards. She lives west of Boston with her husband, author Ed Gaffney. Brockmann's latest, and 15th in the Troubleshooters series, is *Hot Pursuit*, which goes on sale July 28 from Ballantine.

On your nightstand now:

I don't keep books on my nightstand because I can't read anyone else's fiction while I'm writing my own, and the temptation would be too intense. Once I start a good book, I find it impossible to put it down, and I'd never get any writing done. So I keep my TBR (to be read) pile safely out of reach but ready for me to dive into when I'm done--at which point I gleefully read about a book a day. I just finished Virginia Kantra's *Sea Fever* and Hank Phillippi Ryan's *Drive Time*. (Loved 'em both.) Right now I'm in the middle of J.R. Ward's wonderful *Lover Avenged*, with Susan Elizabeth Phillips's *What I Did for Love* and Carla Kelly's *The Surgeon's Lady* in the on deck circle. While I'm writing, I read a lot of World War II historical nonfiction and political commentary. And I do a lot of sudoku--it gives the writing part of my brain a real break.

Favorite book when you were a child:

Oh, there were so many. But the book I remember impacting me the most was Mr. Bass's *Planetoid* by Eleanor Cameron. When I realized it was part of a series (along with *The Wonderful Flight to the Mushroom Planet* and *Stowaway to the Mushroom Planet*), I was absolutely thrilled. I'm talking chills down my spine thrilled. I was maybe 10, but I still remember it to this day, in stark detail--where I was in the library, which corner, what it looked like, what it smelled like (books--ahhh!). I used to kneel in order to browse the stacks, and I remember holding another of the *Mushroom Planet* books in my hand and thinking, "This story that I love so much and regretted having to

finish and say goodbye to the characters that I loved is not over . . . " To this day, I love reading books that are a part of a series, and I love writing them, too. Old friends, you know?

Your top five authors:

Only five? Okay. William Goldman, who wrote *Marathon Man* and *The Princess Bride* and *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (which is my all time favorite movie). J. R. Ward, who writes the brilliantly edgy *Brotherhood of the Black Dagger* series--reading one of her books is like falling backwards into a swimming pool. I become completely submerged in her world. Virginia Kantra, whose latest series is the *Children of the Sea*. She writes about love and family so movingly. Susan Elizabeth Phillips, who always makes me laugh and care so passionately about her characters. Last but not least, Carla Kelly, who is a military historian. She writes mainly Regency-era romances, but she never glosses over the horror and hardships of war. Again, her characters are so real and so vulnerable. I have rarely read a book twice--I'm just not that kind of reader. But I'll do re-reads of Carla's books and love every minute of it.

Book you've faked reading:

There's only one book that I didn't admit to not finishing, and that would be *Jude the Obscure* by Thomas Hardy. It was for my AP English class in high school. I actually really like Hardy's books, but this one just killed me. I couldn't bear the depression and pain that the characters were going through, so I bailed. Ironically, when I took the AP test, the essay question was one for which this book was the perfect example. So I used it--and got the highest possible score. Go figure.

Book you're an evangelist for:

There's a YA book called *Super What?* by Jax Abbott that is a terrific book, particularly for reluctant readers. It's funny and smart--an awesome book. I'm friends with the author, and I bought about a hundred copies and had her sign them, so I could bring a few with me each time I do a book signing. There's usually always a kid or two, dragged along by their parents, and I love giving

them a signed copy of this book (with their parents' permission, of course). I'm also an evangelist for *The Area of My Expertise* by John Hodgman. This is one of the funniest books I've ever read. My son and I like to read aloud from it, particularly the section titled "Jokes That Have Never Produced Laughter."

Book you've bought for the cover:

That would be the movie tie-in to *Cool Hand Luke*. It had Paul Newman on the cover. I was 13. Say no more.

Book that changed your life:

Unlimited Power and *Awaken the Giant Within*, both by Tony Robbins. I read them while I was a young, stay-at-home mom who wanted to become a writer. I was creative, but I liken my creativity at the time to a Ping-Pong ball, zooming around a room with no real direction. Those books taught me to focus my creativity and to learn to assess my strengths and weaknesses--and use them both to my advantage.

Favorite line from a book:

Don't have one. I do have a favorite audiobook, which is Steve Martin's *The Pleasure of My Company*.

Book you most want to read again for the first time:

The Wedding Dress by Virginia Ellis, a book set in the aftermath of the Civil War. The narrator's voice is so warm and lovely, and the story is so sweet. I read it in manuscript form, years ago, at a time when I was struggling to find my way as an author. I was out on tour promoting *The Defiant Hero*, the second book in my *Troubleshooters* series, and I was wondering what the heck I was doing, away from my kids, working so hard. I finished reading the book alone in my hotel room, and there was no one there to tell, to say, "I just read the most wonderful book." Instead, I sat there, and really thought about it--about the way this book had made me feel. It had filled me with hope and happiness, with joy and love for these wonderful characters. And I knew:

This was what I wanted to do. This was why I was writing my own books and working so hard. I wanted to write stories that would touch readers as profoundly as this one had touched me. It was truly inspiring, and I'd love to experience that again

Judy

"If you have integrity, nothing else matters. If you don't have integrity, nothing else matters."