

WHAT EERC BOARD MEMBERS ARE READING

President Sandy Coffin:

Any of Linda Barnes' mysteries. Her heroine/sleuth, Carlotta Carlyle, is a tall (six foot one), shapely redhead who's strong and tough on the outside but soft at the core. She's a straightforward, funny, thoroughly American mystery heroine. Just the sort of companion for a warm day in the shade.

THE RED TENT by Anita Diamant. Although I read this a couple of years ago, it is a book I often recall, particularly in light of other stories of women in the Middle East. The story of Dinah, from her birth and happy childhood in Mesopotamia through her years in Canaan and death in Egypt. When Dinah reaches puberty and enters the Red Tent (the place women visit to give birth or have their monthly periods), her mother and her father's three other wives initiate her into the religious and sexual practices of the tribe. This is a thoroughly enjoyable portrait of a fascinating woman and the life she might have lived.

Vice President Carole Sterry:

I just finished reading THE TIPPING POINT by Malcolm Gladwell—an amazingly interesting and engaging explanation about how trends and epidemics (from fashion to products to behavior) get started. Gladwell describes the three rules of the tipping point (the law of the few, the stickiness factor and power of context). Sounds dry but both my husband and I found this book fascinating and full of interesting tidbits about human behavior I wish I'd known before.

My second recommendation is THREE CUPS OF TEA by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin. A true story of a mountaineer (Greg Mortenson) who, after a failed attempt to climb K2, took pity on the children of poverty in Pakistan and, before returning to the United States, promised to build a school in one remote mountain village. Mortenson had no money but his unbelievable determination and selflessness enabled him to eventually build several schools, a bridge and several centers for women—all in a country where Americans are generally hated. He faced life threatening situations and I was constantly amazed that he continued returning to this dangerous country where he won the hearts of all who met him. Such a beautiful story of strength and love. You can't read this book without pondering where we'd be right now as a world power if we reached out to our enemies with the kind of love and much needed help Greg Mortenson gave.

Treasurer and Co-Membership Director Barbara McKillip:

CAN'T WAIT TO GET TO HEAVEN by Fannie Flagg - A reaffirming answer to the question, "why are we here," is given in this warm, humorous look at the life and death of a high-spirited, inquisitive octogenarian.

BACHELOR BROTHERS' BED & BREAKFAST by Bill Richardson - Eccentric fraternal twins, Hector and Virgil, offer their home on a Canadian island as a refuge, a retreat, a haven to travelling bibliophiles. Winner of the Stephen Leacock Award for Humor (Canada).

GROWING UP by Russell Baker - A charming memoir by Pulitzer Prize winner Russell Baker about growing up during the Depression as the son of a very strong-willed, optimistic, widowed-mother who had very high expectations of her son.

ELSEWHERE by Gabrielle Zevin - Fifteen-year-old Liz, the victim of a hit-and-run driver, is furious when she finds herself on a ship bound for Elsewhere: a place rather like Earth, only you age in reverse. She doesn't want to get younger. She wants to get her driver's license, go to college, fall in love, get married, have a life! But perhaps, having a life on Elsewhere is possible--if she'll only open herself up to its possibilities.

Barbara also recommends:

BEL CANTO by Ann Patchett

WHAT AM I DOING HERE? by Bruce Chatwin

and mysteries by Patricia MacDonald.

Co-Membership Director Karen Antikajian

Since others have already recommended *THE SHADOW OF THE WIND*, *KITE RUNNER*, *BEL CANTO*, *THE BOOK THIEF*, and *THREE CUPS OF TEA*, here are some of my other favorites:

THE LANGUAGE OF BAKLAVA, a Memoir by Diana Abu-Jaber. Weaving in traditions and recipes of her Jordanian-born, gregarious father, the author contrasts her growing up in the United States with her experiences in Jordan when her father moves the family there for several years. She also contrasts her feelings about the Middle East as a child and later as a young adult when she revisits the country.

MY SISTER'S KEEPER by Jodi Picoult. Told by Anna, the 13-year-old who was genetically engineered to be a perfect match for her cancer-ridden older sister, we experience her heart-wrenching dilemma of having to agree to once again serve as a donor by giving up one of her kidney's to prolong her sister's life. She decides instead to sue her parents to gain control over her own body. Her decision has an effect on the whole family with an unexpected twist at the end.

MARCH by Geraldine Brooks. The author has created a story of what the father of *LITTLE WOMEN* by Alcott was experiencing during the year he was serving in the Civil War. We get a glimpse of the feelings of some of the northern citizens before the war (including Emerson and Thoreau) and how deep feelings can change when people actually become a part of what is happening. As a Union chaplain, March finds his faith in himself and in his religious and political convictions severely tested.

For anyone interested in autism, I would recommend:

DANIEL ISN'T TALKING by Marti Leimbach. Narrated by Melanie Marsh, an American woman living in England who seems to have it all: Stephen, a rich if somewhat starchy husband; Emily, a vivacious daughter; and an adorable son named Daniel. But, after a normal infancy, at two-years-old Daniel begins to act strangely and throw terrible tantrums. When he is diagnosed with autism, his mother searches for the best treatment while his father is in denial and then wants him placed in a home. Modeled on the her own autistic son, the author takes us through emotional highs and lows as she seeks treatment.

BORN ON A BLUE DAY: Inside the Extraordinary Mind of an Autistic Savant by Daniel Tammet. The writing in this book is entirely different from that of *Daniel Isn't Talking*. Instead of emotional highs and lows, the writing is very flat since that is the way the autistic author thinks. He says that metaphors mean nothing to him and are very confusing because he thinks so literally. But seeing autism from the inside out, so to speak, is very enlightening. As one read's Daniel's incredible story, you have to marvel at what he was able to accomplish and overcome.

and:

PEACE LIKE A RIVER by Leif Enger: Narrated by an eleven-year-old boy as he recalls events of his childhood in a small town in Minnesota around 1962. He warns his readers, "Here's how it went. Make of it what you will." Written with rich prose, it is one of those books that stays with you.

A YELLOW RAFT IN BLUE WATER by Michael Dorris: A cross-generational story of three Native American women in Montana whose lives intertwine and who must come to grips with the past. They share their stories with the reader yet keep secrets from each other. The daughter, Rayona, starts the stories, followed by her mother. But things don't fall into place until the stories of the grandmother that answer questions and tie things together.

TAR (Teachers As Readers) Gayla Storm Clark:

"I dropped my entire stack of waiting books, unable to leave *BROKEN FOR YOU* by Stephanie Kallos until it's satisfactory end! If any members read this over summer, I'd love to have a book group discussion."

"A compelling, richly layered story reminiscent of works by John Irving and Anne Tyler in its bittersweet humor and well-drawn characters." *Library Journal* (starred review)

Sue Monk Kidd says "There is a message here about creating family in the most unusual places.... I promise you this: you will not be sorry you read this book.. It's a wonderful engaging story."

Board Member Nathaniel Teich:

Being slow to respond, I see that Carole beat me to Malcolm Gladwell, but not his latest book, titled BLINK. He's a very readable journalist, writing frequently for THE NEW YORKER, with unusual themes illustrated by often compelling social, psychological, and scientific examples. TIPPING POINT has been a best seller, and BLINK follows with analysis of how people with expertise make quick decisions or diagnoses on the basis of what seems to be split second or immediate intuitive observations. Just after I recommended BLINK, along comes Dr. Jerome Groopman, Harvard professor and teacher at Harvard Medical school, writing HOW DOCTORS THINK. He discusses why they should not make snap diagnoses and decisions, and suggests that we, as patients, should be prepared to ask for 2nd, 3rd, or 4th opinions."

Board Member Shirley Murata:

EMPRESS ORCHID by Anchee Min (2004) historical fiction. A fascinating read and perspective on women in China. A rich depiction of court life and the strict traditions held within the Forbidden City. With genuine knowledge of Chinese culture and language and her precise research, the author is able to portray a more accurate picture of Empress Dowager Tsu Hsi (Orchid). Chinese history books and Western historians have often credited Empress Orchid with little importance and even negative influence, when in fact, she was the "power behind the throne". Her passion and diplomacy helped to preserve the imperial culture during the last 46 years of the Chi'ing Dynasty.

CONFESSIONS OF A SHOPAHOLIC - Sophie Kinsella (2001) Humor

SHOPAHOLIC TAKES MANHATTEN (2002)

SHOPAHOLIC TIES THE KNOT (2003)

Written in British style and humor, you will be entertained by all the predicaments that befall Rebecca Bloomwood, shopaholic, and surprised by their outcomes. When you think Becky is really "in for it" and will finally learn her lesson, something happens and she always "lands on her feet"!

Two other sequels yet to read: SHOPAHOLIC AND SISTER (2004) SHOPAHOLIC AND THE BABY (2007) - on recent best seller list.

Board Member Valerie King:

I have recently read two books by Kevin Baker that are historical fiction and were both **great!** PARADISE ALLEY is about the draft riots in New York during The Civil War. DREAMLAND is about New York as well and the wave of immigration around the turn of the century. A FINE BALANCE by Rohinton Mistry and A SUITABLE BOY by Vikram Seth are both books about India that I loved. Both are long but I learned a ton about India, Indians, and life in general.

I am currently reading EAT, PRAY, LOVE by Elizabeth Gilbert. The cover calls it "One Woman's Search for Everything Across Italy, India and Indonesia". It is funny and deep at the same time.