



# Sunriver Books & Music

## 2020 January

### Newsletter

[Sunriverbooks.com](http://Sunriverbooks.com) 541-593-2525

*Happy New Year!*



Saturday January 18 at 5:00 PM John Bruning, author of *Indestructible*, returns for his latest book, *Race of Aces: WWII's Elite Airmen and the Epic Battle to Become Masters of the Sky*. Wow, he can write! He has all of the requisite footnotes and indexes to prove this was a comprehensively researched book, but it races across the page like a tsunami!

That we won the war in the Pacific is a near on miracle. Our guys were fighting in inhospitable places, outnumbered, against a foe that did not tolerate frailty or failure. What did we have? A bunch of crazy brave young men willing to hurl themselves into the sky flying unpredictable machines into fierce battles with the odds dramatically against them.

Nor were the Japanese and jungles their only foe. Our pilots were given planes sometimes more intent on killing them than the Japanese! Profit over human safety in the manufacture of planes is not a new phenomenon. Lockheed's P-38 Lightning was designed to go higher, faster thus have a better chance at taking on the nimble Japanese zeroes. A good idea, but poor execution. The planes had a nasty habit of killing the pilot and destroying their expensive selves. Engine failure on takeoff was one of the nasty surprises that felled plane and pilot. Or how about going in to battle and guns won't work? It is not as if their enemy would give them a time out from a ferocious battle to go fix their guns! As the planes were delivered and pilots trained on the complicated new system, in April 1942 there were 20 fatal crashes in California and Washington. Young pilots killed by their planes before they even got a chance at the intended foe.

In 1942 the battle in the Pacific was not going well. General MacArthur, not a fan of the Air Force to begin with, was finding no reason to believe they were going to help win this war. Then two things happened. General George Kenney, an experienced battle-hardened pilot himself, took over the pilots and a gauntlet was thrown. Our flyboys were not about to walk away from a dare. Captain Eddie Rickenbacker was the stuff of legends, a larger than life hero. Fighting over the killing fields of WWI he shot down 26 enemy planes and won the highest award for combat, the Medal of Honor. He visited the Pacific, talking with the flyboys, keeping them spellbound as he recounted some of his exploits. He was known as the ace of aces, the best of the best. The highest total for an ace in the Pacific was Buzz Wagner with 8. Quite a difference. But the skies were buzzing with Japanese, a target rich environment. General Kenney seized the moment offering a case of scotch to the first pilot to beat Captain Rickenbacker's record and the race was on!

But this was war, not a game, the stakes were life and death. John Bruning introduces us to the flyboys who took up the challenge. Gerald Johnson, a hometown kid from Eugene Oregon, an outdoors enthusiast, bit of a dare devil, totally besotted with his sweetheart Barbara. Dick Bong, a quiet farm boy from Wisconsin with an affinity for machinery nurtured from his years of working on farm equipment. Tommy McGuire, a smart New Jersey transplant to Florida, a rich kid surrounded by poor boys who never quite fit in. Tom Lynch, movie star handsome, with a degree in chemical engineering and the makings of a career in command. And others, all treated with respect and compassion by Bruning as he details a race that had far more consequences than any game.

Bruning takes the story from the delivery of the P-38's to young flyboys with a penchant for mischief on to the end of the war and conclusion of the *Race of Aces*. Zooming under the Golden Gate Bridge, skimming the water at screaming speed. Exhilarating! Doesn't that sound like fun??? Well, I might think it sounds like something pretty cool to try, but Air Force command was not amused. The battle scenes in the Pacific are detailed, well researched, and gripping. Our flyboys diving in against outrageous odds, crazy brave. And in the end, war exacts its price. The *Race of Aces* is thoroughly researched with the foot notes to prove it, but it reads like a thriller, the scenes brought to vivid life in remembrance of young men who gave their all for their country.

Hollywood are you listening? This has all the elements of a blockbuster! Handsome flyboys, fierce battles, lots of action, love stories.

*Indestructible; One Man's Rescue That Changed The Course of WWII* is an account of bravery and ingenuity in the Pacific theater of WWII. Pappy Gunn, spent twenty years in the Navy, after retiring he lived the good life with his family in Manila as Operations Manager for Philippine airlines. Then Pearl Harbor happened and Pappy was called back to serve as a Captain in the Army Air Corps with orders to fly the top brass out of harm's way. The Japanese were heading for Manila, but MacArthur's people led Pappy to believe there was ample time to remove their men then return to fly his family out. They were disastrously wrong. Pappy was half a world away when the Japanese, not known for their kindness to prisoners, took his wife Polly and four children to Santo Tomas Internment Camp.

A chest full of medals attest to Pappy's bravery; a Silver Star, two Distinguished Flying Crosses, and nine Purple hearts. His family was never out of his thoughts, rescuing them his top priority. He also believed strongly in doing things his way, engaging highly ranked desk bound officers while winning the admiration of those fighting in the field. He "borrowed" (okay, steal might be the correct description) a squadron of B25 bombers from the Dutch Air Force in Australia, in order to fly them on a raid to the Philippines. Pappy was not always bound by rules if he knew a better way. General Kenney realized Pappy was a boffin and gave him free reign. His innovations are still being used today; in 2010 they saved the author's life when he was reporting on the conflict in Afghanistan. Bruning was in a helicopter that went down, a considerable force of Taliban fighters approached, he was protected by Apache gunships using firepower innovations devised by Pappy Gunn back in WWII. How is that for an interesting twist, the author of Pappy Gunn's biography was saved by his subject. . There is a lot of well researched history in this marvelous book, but it reads like a thriller, because that was the way Pappy Gunn lived, full speed ahead and the Devil take the hindmost.

Photo credit to Renee Bruning.

## Upcoming Author Appearances

Saturday March 7, 2020 at 5:00 PM **Elephant Speak** by Melissa Crandall

Saturday March 21, 2020 at 5:00 PM **88 Names** by Matt Ruff

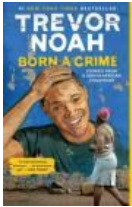
Saturday April 11, 2020 at 5:00 PM **Catch and Release** by Les AuCoin

Join us to enjoy fabulous authors! Hearing an author speak clarifies and enriches the reading experience. Many Author readings are free with refreshments served and drawings for prizes. Sign up to attend events by calling 541-593-2525, e-mailing [sunriver-books@sunriverbooks.com](mailto:sunriver-books@sunriverbooks.com) or stopping by Sunriver Books & Music. Space may be limited for some events.

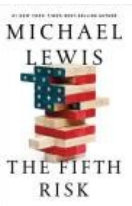
Check [sunriverbooks.com](http://sunriverbooks.com) for changes or additions to the schedule.

Every year our Book Clubs vote on their favorite of the year's selections. Here are 2019's top selections.

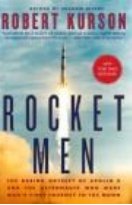
### Non-Fiction Book Club Favorites of 2019.



**Born a Crime: Stories of a South African Childhood** by Trevor Noah. Today Trevor Noah is an internationally known talk show host and comedian, by any measure a huge success. His prospects did not always seem so fortunate. He was literally born a crime, during apartheid in South Africa it was illegal, with resulting prison sentences if caught, for a white person and a black person to be intimate much less have a child. Trevor could not acknowledge his white Swiss father in public, hard for a toddler to understand. Socially he was not really part of any group; the whites were separate, by law, his black relatives could not risk letting him play outdoors for fear of discovery. While we all know South Africa had a harsh policy of apartheid, this is an intimate look at the effect on one little boy. Mandela came to power and things changed while Trevor was a child. He has an incredibly strong bond with his independent minded mother. Their relationship is at the center of the book. This being Trevor Noah's early life, there are many funny stories too. Read it, be immersed in another culture and the rise of one talented young man.

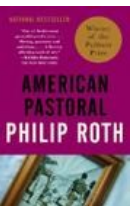


**The Fifth Risk** by Michael Lewis. Breathing fresh air (or at least air that is not imminently dangerous), eating safe food, avoiding a nuclear melt down, ensuring that future generations will have wilderness to enjoy; these and many other facets of life in the USA have been protected by departments of government. While it may be fashionable to oppose bureaucracy, I don't think any of us would get very far without air to breath or food to eat. In the past these departments were staffed by scientists, economists, and people who knew a bit about the work they were doing for the American people. Times have changed. Lewis explains what is happening in some of the departments essential to running the country. In the Department of Energy, tasked with such mundane issues as risk assessment for nuclear reactors, we lost essential personnel. Department of Agriculture staff that could tell one end of a steer from another were replaced by such great hires as a cabana operator unversed in anything agricultural.



**Rocket Men** by Robert Kurson is a fascinating account of Apollo 8, enriched by extensive research. He interviewed astronauts Frank Borman, Jim Lovell, and Bill Anders. I remember watching the launches on TV, back in the days when space exploration was new and a charismatic young President, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, challenged the nation to send a rocket to the moon. An assassin's bullet would claim him before that goal was achieved but President Lyndon Baines Johnson got behind the project, sharing the goal. Nevertheless, it looked unlikely to succeed by the summer of 1968. Misfortune in the attempt with Apollo 1 resulted in the tragic deaths of three astronauts. Apollo 2 and 3 were scrapped. Apollo 5 and 6 were unmanned flights. Apollo 7 would orbit the earth. Going to the moon was a whole other level of technical difficulty and they put the mission together in an astounding 4 months! The Soviet Union was ahead in the space race, planning more daring missions. But NASA was determined to win, and I was just as determined for them. Let us not forget that our opponent in this race, the Soviet Union, sent an innocent dog into space to perish with no intention of bringing the animal back to earth. They deserved to lose. And lose they did, because three daring men agreed to climb into an untested volatile rocket and hurtle themselves into space. To go where no man had gone before, and to do it with no assurance they would see their planet or families again. Thankfully they made it and were generous in their reminiscences with Robert Kurson. The pages of this book are packed with drama and history, it is a great story.

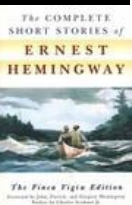
### Classics Book Club 2019 Favorites.



**American Pastoral** by Phillip Roth, winner of the Pulitzer Prize. Seymore Levov was destined to succeed, a popular high school athlete, married a beauty queen, enlisted in the Marine Corp, and then took over the family business; he was living the good life. Then the 60's came, Vietnam tore the country apart, and his daughter Merry destroyed his certainties with her passionate beliefs and reckless actions. It is a powerful story that captures historic events and the impact when a member of the family makes tragic choices. In 2016 Ewan McGregor directed and starred in a film adaptation.

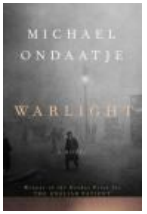


**A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court** by Mark Twain. Hank is going about his life, a common sense sort of Yankee, working as a mechanic when he is coshed on the head, knocked out, and awakens not in 1879 anymore, but in 528, the days of Camelot. Discovered and captured, the wily Hank saves himself by ingenuity and predictions (after all, he knows the future). Made a minister to the king he, of course, continues to get into trouble. All of your favorites from the tales of King Arthur and the Round Table are there. Twain has fun with this time travel satire of a no-nonsense Yankee palling around with King Arthur and his Knights.

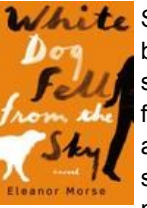


**The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway**. Winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, Hemingway is a giant of American Literature. **Two Hearted River** is set in the Upper Peninsula region of Michigan. Nick Adams returned from war, he gets off the train near Seney, finding the town burned out, he continues on his way with his pack, establishing a camp above the river, spending his days fishing. In this way, Nick is experiencing feelings from having been at war and the sense of dislocation in returning. In 1919 Hemingway spent time in the area with three friends on a fishing trip. **Indian Camp** has young Nick accompanying his father, Dr. Adams, to help a Native American woman with a difficult birth. The story is a rite of passage for Nick, a young frightened boy who is made part of something terrible in the adult world.

## Fiction Book Club favorites of 2019.



**Warlight** by Michael Ondaatje. In 1945 Nathaniel was 14, his sister Rachel almost 16, when their parents announced they would be traveling to Singapore while the children would stay in London and be looked after by the upstairs lodger, a man they referred to as the Moth. The move was necessitated by their father's job; the children would remain behind to continue their education. Their father left first, Nathaniel and Rachel helped their mother pack and all too soon she was gone. Quickly the children begin to suspect their new guardian's activities might not all be strictly legal. He was a bit loose on rules too, but seemed to have their best interests to heart. Their home used to be quiet, now a variety of colorful characters come around to see the Moth, bound by their experiences during the war. This is a new life with new skills to be learned. Later their mother returns, without their father or explanations, leaving Nathaniel and Rachel confused and unsettled. An act of violence changes their lives. Years later Nathaniel uncovers his mother's secrets. Ondaatje is a brilliant author, I believe this is his best book since *The English Patient*. In this story he blends humor and tragedy, the moodiness of London, the chaos of the war years, and the actions people are forced to take.



**White Dog Fell From the Sky** by Eleanor Morse. It was not difficult to get on the wrong side of the authorities in 1976 South Africa if you are black; in fact, it was easy. Isaac Mutherthe, a young medical student, witnessed the murder of his friend by authorities, now his life is in jeopardy and he must flee into neighboring Botswana leaving his family behind. Isaac meets two special beings in Botswana; white dog and Alice Mendelssohn. Without papers or prospects his options are few. Isaac is fortunate to find work as a gardener. Alice sees that Isaac is a bright young man; she intuits that he is in some kind of trouble; and forges a friendship with her young gardener. When he goes missing Alice refuses to believe he abandoned his job, she searches for him learning truths about herself and Africa that will change her life. Luminous writing, a poignant story, and moments of grace.



**Nightingale** by Kristin Hannah. This New York Times bestselling epic is soon to be a movie. Set during WWII the story tells of two French sisters with heartbreaking choices. Vianne's husband is fighting at the front, she clings to the belief Hitler will not invade France, nor come to her little village, but of course that happens. She lives on a lovely small farm, La Jardin, in the Loire Valley with her young daughter, Sophie. Isabelle, Vianne's headstrong, independent minded younger sister is sent from Paris to La Jardin to live with her. Forced to house a German officer in the home, the war becomes increasingly present. Isabelle's attitude and brave activities with the resistance bring danger ever closer to the women and child sharing their home with a Nazi.

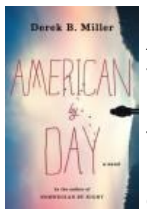


**Almost Sisters** by Joshilyn Jackson. Tragedy and humor blend, Jackson possesses a talent for writing in a way that important social issues are explored while leaving the reader feeling happy. Leia Briggs has some problems. The Batman escapade was a total accident, well sort of; he was dead sexy after all. Leia is a popular illustrator of graphic novels, not prone to anonymous hookups; at a convention she imbibed too many tequilas and had her way with the masked crusader. She is thirty eight and single, she wants this baby. Before she can tell her family she is pregnant with a biracial baby by an anonymous superhero, a raft of phone calls arrive, her 90 year old grandmother Birchie is succumbing, in a most public way, to dementia. The Briggs founded their small Alabama town, they were wealthy and influential, still are, although Birchie and Leia are the last of their line (well until the arrival of Leia's surprise). Birchie lives alone in a big old Victorian home with her lifelong friend, Wattie and it has been through the care of this friend that her deterioration was kept a secret until the phone calls. Leia will find there are secrets in that big old Victorian that may bring dire consequences. Tremendously ambitious in scope, and with a hopeful message for the future that I thoroughly enjoyed reading.

## Mystery Book Club Favorites of 2019.



**The Word is Murder** by Anthony Horowitz. In a daring move, Horowitz becomes a character in his novel, a sidekick to a brilliant but curmudgeonly PI, Daniel Hawthorne. Diana Cowper enters a funeral parlor to arrange for a funeral, her own. Six hours later she is murdered. Hawthorne was a top police detective, until his disgrace. He knows how to solve crimes. When a murder is out of the ordinary, the cops call him in to solve the case, sort of a PI consultant. The strange timing of Cowper's murder, her upper-class connections, and her famous son (an actor in America) all add to up to the kind of case they hand off to Hawthorne. He is short of funds, and thinks a way to solve this might be to have a writer pen a book about his cases. Like Sherlock Holmes and Watson. Hawthorne worked as a technical consultant on murder matters for a TV show recently, Horowitz was the writer. He puts the proposition to Horowitz, to be his Watson. From this beginning springs a rollicking good read.

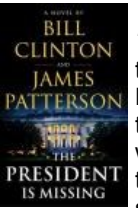


**American by Day** by Derek Mille brings back Sigrid, from his brilliant *Norwegian by Night*, in this entertaining novel tackling such weighty subjects as cop shootings, racism, the role of women in society, and the differences between America and Norway. Chief Inspector Sigrid Odegard feels the need for time to reflect, she takes leave expecting to spend time with her father. It is not to be, her father informs her that she has a ticket to New York, the flight leaves tomorrow. Her brother's last letter was disturbing, her father tried to reach Marcus right away but he had already fled. On arrival in northern New York, Sigrid discovers Marcus is wanted by the local police in connection with the death of a woman. There are many differences between law enforcement in Norway and America, not least among them that Norwegian police are educated in criminology then rise through the ranks based on solving crimes, where in America the Sheriff is elected. Sigrid's American counterpart, Sheriff Irving Wylie, is a middle aged, Republican, graduate of Loyola divinity school with no background in law enforcement prior to his election. It would have been easy to make such a character appear as a bumpkin. Thankfully that is not the case. Irv is wicked smart, sly, and funny. While he may not have degrees in law enforcement, he is an excellent cop with a lot of empathy. I liked Irv and would be delighted to read more about him; complicated guy that Irv. Did I mention funny too? Irv is intent on finding Marcus, there is evidence indicating he is possibly guilty of murder, but Irv is willing to keep an open mind. His bosses not so much so, they are politicians and want an arrest, for them Marcus will do just fine. So Sigrid is dropped into America during the Obama versus McCain election trying to find her missing brother, forced to collaborate with the local cops on a search that will take them into the Adirondack wilderness. An excellent story and a lot to ponder.

## Mystery Book Club 2019 Favorites Continued.



**Rising Man** by Abir Mukherjee, the first of a series set in India. Captain Sam Wyndham's life was going well, a good career as a Scotland Yard detective, marriage to the woman of his dreams. WWI and the Influenza that followed put an end to his happiness. Left a widower with a morphine habit from war wounds and nothing to lose, he accepts a post in Calcutta. The heat, colors, and sounds of India are overwhelming. Before he has settled, he is thrown into investigating the murder of a senior official found outside a brothel with a note stuffed in his mouth advising the Brits to leave India. Pressured to solve this quickly, Wyndham dives in assisted by Inspector Digby and Sergeant Banerjee. Digby is a bigot and Banerjee is the brighter of the two, but in 1919 the Brits had the upper hand. Wyndham soon recognizes Banerjee's intelligence, much to Digby's dismay. One of my favorite characters is Annie, the dead man's secretary, half Brit, half Indian, she spans both cultures and fits in neither. The series has a fascinating setting, interesting era, great characters, and brilliant writing.

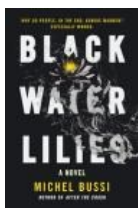


**The President is Missing** by Bill Clinton and James Patterson, a story ripped right from today's headlines. Hackers are intent on harming the national interests of the US except this time their goal is not rigging an election, but bringing down the country. President Duncan receives a message outside normal channels, a message that leads him to believe the country is facing a cyberattack of immense power. Nor is this the only threat, the President is convinced someone on the inside has to be involved. Thus he is willing to abandon protocol, slip his handlers and meet alone in an attempt to gain information on the coming attack. Of course things will go awry, bullets will fly, and the President will flee. But in addition to the car chases and shooting, there is the plausible scenario of a hostile attack using not weapons that explode, but the computers that keep the country running in everything from the water we drink, to the electricity that turns on our lights, or the credit cards that allow us to make purchases. What if... it is a chilling possibility. Adding to the tension is a beautiful assassin, who listens to classic music. Who is she trying to kill? And who hired her? Former President Bill Clinton knows about the running of the White House and the potential of a cyberattack; he puts this knowledge to good use in telling a rip snorting tale. James Patterson is well versed in writing mysteries, they combine talents to bring a story you will not want to put down.

### January 2020 Book Clubs



January 6 Fiction Book Club discusses **Chances Are** by Richard Russo. Traversing the turbulent sixties, to the changes coming in 2015, Russo captures the feelings of the times with pitch perfect clarity. Teddy, Lincoln, and Mickey met in college, different as night and day, but somehow, they fit with each other perfectly, were known as the Three Musketeers. The story opens with the three men, now 66, reuniting for a weekend at Martha's Vineyard where Lincoln has a summer home inherited from his mother that he is grappling with selling. It has been a few years since they have seen each other, and the setting takes them back to their college days when they were all a bit in love with the fourth member of their group, their d'Artagnan, Jacy, a fiery young woman who faced life with gusto. They remember sitting tensely by a small TV, waiting to learn their lottery numbers for the draft, numbers that could mean the difference between living or dying in the jungles of Vietnam. They remember the weekend Jacy disappeared. These memories lead to an owning up of their lives, the choices that they made, the choices that their circumstances lead them to, and the chance that the possibilities were still open to them. A heartfelt, often funny, lovely story about three ordinary men.



January 13 Mystery Book Club discusses **Black Water Lilies** by Michel Bussi. This imaginative story takes us into the heart of Monet's Giverny where three women lived with their passions and sorrows. Two would perish, only one would survive. The first, our narrator is an elderly woman, accompanied by her beloved German Shepard, Neptune. The second, Stephanie, is a teacher, sensual and beautiful, at the peak of young life but unfulfilled. The third, Fanette, is only a child, but a child with an awesome talent and the promise of an exciting career as an artist. The murder of a prominent man in the community confounds the police with a vexing puzzle. Jerome Morval, collector of art and women, was found in the stream feeding Monet's garden. His death was excessive; stabbed, battered with a rock, and drowned. Inspector Laurenc Serenac and Inspector Silvio Benavides agree the case is complicated but employ different methods in trying to untangle the threads of the crime, Silvio painstakingly accumulating evidence and Laurenc focusing on the people, especially the attractive young teacher. Was the murder the result of Morval's philandering ways? Or did it have something to do with the Water Lilly paintings by Monet he coveted? Little do they know the answer and danger may be within the secrets held tight by three women. Art lovers will be delighted by this intimate look at Giverny and the paintings of the Impressionists.

### Upcoming Book Club Dates for Monday Evenings at 6:00 PM

Everyone is welcome, light refreshments are served.

**Happy New Year!**

#### February

February 10, 2020 **Shadow District** by Arnaldur Indridason [Mystery Book Club](#)

February 17, 2020 **The Great Believers** by Rebecca Makkai [Fiction Book Club](#)

February 24, 2020 **Blowout** by Rachel Maddow [Non-Fiction Book Club](#)

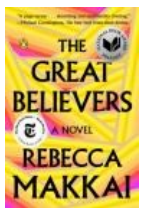
#### March

March 9, 2020 **Black Ascot** by Charles Todd [Mystery Book Club](#)

March 16, 2020 **Tortilla Flats** by John Steinbeck [Classics Book Club](#)

March 23, 2020 **Women in the Castle** by Jessica Shattuck [Fiction Book Club](#)

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For our customers who enjoy audio books as well as reading, we hope you find Libro a good source.

### Community Room.

**If you are involved in a club or gathering that would enjoy using space in Sunriver Village, please remember the Village owners have kindly provided space in the loft area above Sunriver Books & Music. The space is available for uses compatible with the bookstore during Sunriver Books & Music's hours of operation. Using the space is free. To reserve the space for your group contact Deon at Sunriver Books & Music. Sunriver Village is an ideal place to meet. After concluding the day's agenda enjoy a meal at one of the Village restaurants and browse in the many shops.**