



Sunriver Books & Music

June 2011

Newsletter

Sunriverbooks.com

541-593-2525



Craig Johnson, the star of our lineup of great authors, returns Sunday July 3rd at 5:00 PM for a presentation on his latest book, ***Hell is Empty***. Mavericks is co-hosting the event in their beautiful facility. We are very grateful to Mavericks for helping bring such a star of the literary world to Sunriver. Craig's events fill up fast so please sign up to attend early. Speaking of stars, Craig Johnson's Walt Longmire series is being filmed by Warner and the A&E network. Robert Taylor will star as Walt, Lou Diamond Phillips as Henry Standing Bear, and Katie Sackhoff as Vic. Craig will have interesting stories to tell as his literary series makes its way onto film. This year Craig is also bringing along a new author. C. M. Wendelboe's ***Death Along The Spirit Road*** is set on the Pine Ridge Reservation with FBI agent Manny Tanno as his sleuth. ***Hell is Empty*** releases June 2nd. With the event happening the first weekend in July I thought a heads up this month would be helpful.



Central Oregon resident Jonathan Stewart will give a slide show presentation on his book, ***Pilgrimage to the Edge***, Saturday June 11th at 5:00 PM. One of the world's great hiking trails runs right through Oregon, The Pacific Crest Trail. Through hikers cover 2663 intimidating but gorgeous miles to complete the whole journey without pause. Stewart chose a different method, breaking the trail into manageable segments taking from 2003 to 2006 to hike the Pacific Crest Trail. Stewart's book details his experience in hiking the trail along with some practical advice if you feel inspired to tackle the trail yourself. Stewart's book is a journal of his time on the trail. The Pacific Crest Trail can be a great day hike, a project spread over many years, or a test of your endurance. No matter how you hike it, it is spectacular. This is gorgeous country and I am looking forward to watching the slide show. It should inspire us to get out on the trail and start hiking!

June 18th at 5:00 PM Heather Sharfeddin will give a presentation on her latest book, ***Damaged Goods***. This is a nuanced, engrossing story set in Oregon. Hershel doesn't remember much from before his car accident but it doesn't take long to measure people's response to him and come to the conclusion he was not a nice guy. How would it feel to wake up from an accident and realize you were not a good person? Hershel's employees at the auction house notice a change in their boss after the accident but they keep a wary distance. Hershel cannot remember what he might have been up to prior to the accident, but he suspects it was unsavory. If we cannot respect ourselves what have we got to hold onto? Hershel is trying to rebuild his life into something better. Silvie has troubles of her own; she is on the lam from a man who means her no good, a sheriff gone bad still invested with the power of the law. Silvie crosses paths with Hershel when her car breaks down and he gives her a hand. As they try to figure out the next step in their increasingly complicated lives they must rely on each other and face down the danger that looms ever closer. Interesting characters and an intriguing premise along with an Oregon setting make this a very readable story. Heather's presentation should give us a fascinating evening.



Author events are free and a great way to hear about new books or authors. Refreshments will be served and there will be a drawing for prizes. Events are held at Sunriver Books & Music, except for Craig Johnson on 7/3/11. Call 541-593-2525, e-mail sunriverbooks@sunriverbooks.com or stop by Sunriver Books & Music to sign up to attend.

Upcoming Author Appearances

Sunday July 3rd at 5:00 PM *Hell is Empty* by Craig Johnson. Sign up early, Craig's audience fills up fast. He puts on an excellent show! The event is co-hosted by Mavericks and will be in their great facility.

Saturday July 9th at 5:00 PM ***Oregon Favorites: Trails and Tales*** by William Sullivan (slide show)

Saturday August 6th at 5:00 PM ***Quilt by Association*** by Arlene Sachitano

Saturday August 13th at 5:30 PM ***Joy for Beginners*** by Erica Bauermeister

Saturday August 20th at 5:00 PM ***The Memory Wall*** by Anthony Doerr

Saturday September 24th at 5:00 PM Jane Kirkpatrick

Saturday October 8th at 5:00 PM ***Feathers*** by Thor Hanson

Saturday October 29th at 5:00 PM ***Birds of Paradise*** by Diana Abu-Jaber

We hope you join us to enjoy these fabulous authors! Hearing an author speak clarifies and enriches the reading experience. Author readings are free unless otherwise noted with refreshments served and drawings for prizes. Call or e-mail Sunriver Books & Music to attend and be entered in the prize drawings. Space may be limited for some events. Check our web site, Sunriverbooks.com, for changes and additions.

[A Month of Americana: The South!](#)

Each year we concentrate for a month on exploring the literary culture of another country or region. Last year our book clubs suggested we add a month concentrating on a different region or state in the good old USA. It was a splendid suggestion! We have a vast country with cultural and geological differences between states and regions, it will be fun to explore the literature of our land each June as we head toward the 4th of July celebration. This year is the 150th Anniversary of the Civil War, it seemed like a good time to explore the south.



Backseat Saints by Joshilyn Jackson is full of characters that are quirky, hopelessly flawed, and full of heart. Rose Mae Lolly's mother ran off leaving the child with her father, a man too fond of strong drink and quick to use his fists. After one beating too many Rose Mae took off making her way from diner to diner along the interstate. Thom makes her Mrs. Ro Grandee. Ro loves her handsome Thom, loves him with all her feisty heart. But she loves life too and she knows one of these days Thom is going to hit her too bad, is going to break her in ways the local hospital can't fix. Maybe only one of them can live and Ro would prefer to keep on breathing.

Bitter in the Mouth by Monique Truong has small town southern life fairly brimming on the page. Family tragedies, a dark secret, and humorous quirky characters keep the narrative moving. Betrayal, misunderstanding, and redemption color the story. Linda is different, she tastes words. Every conversation sets off a blizzard of sensation in her mouth, exploding flavors ricocheting through her senses like gunfire. She does her best to overcome her condition; Linda is a good kid, a quiet young girl who adores her Uncle Harper. Somehow, with Harper's help, she perseveres through college and into a successful career. A family tragedy brings her back to face the secrets of the past.



My Summer of Southern Discomfort by Stephanie Gayle follows a New York lawyer's uncomfortable move to a small southern town. Natalie intended all to follow in the footsteps of her father, a famous civil right's lawyer. She was on track to reach all her dreams, hiring on with a prestigious New York law firm after graduating from Harvard. Not in the plans was having an affair with a married partner in the firm, falling in love, or taking the blame when he makes a costly error. With her career in tatters Natalie heads south, where a small Georgia town is delighted to hire a Harvard educated prosecutor and not about to look this gift horse too closely in the mouth. Natalie's family is horrified by her move to a small conservative southern town and the prosecutor's office. For a long time Natalie feels like an alien, but she begins to open up to a slower pace of life. When she is partnered with an older southern lawyer on a murder case, she discovers her new co-workers have a lot more on the ball than she suspected. She finds a sense of community, leaving the big city wasn't the end of life just a new beginning.



Nashville Chrome by Rick Bass takes us on a wild ride to a time before rapper MC Hammer told us "You Got The Power". A time when a young truck driver shocked a nation by showing that raw power with his swiveling hips and curled lip, Presley would be called King. The face of music was about to change. Jerry Lee was pounding the ivories and howling to the moon, and the Brown family rose to stardom with a sound so pure, so full of life and yearning, that it reached right down in the soul. Roots in the south, a dad who loves the bottle too well, and hardscrabble poverty shape them. Fame brings its own debts to pay. This is the life story of the very real Brown Trio, but it is far more, it is also the story of a music revolution that started in Nashville Tennessee. Rick Bass hits all the right notes in **Nashville Chrome**.



I keep recommending Rick Bragg because he is so good! **The Prince of Frogtown** by Rick Bragg is the story of his Daddy. Rick grew up poor in rural Alabama. Rick became the southeastern bureau chief for the New York Times and won the Pulitzer Prize for reporting in Haiti. Fatherhood was not on his agenda, but a beautiful Redhead sashayed into his life. It took becoming a father to cause Rick to look back at his own Daddy, a rough and tumble man addicted to the taste of strong drink, quick to use his fists, beaten down by hard times. There is a world of difference between Rick's childhood and the life of his son. His son knows there will always be food, toys, hugs, and cuddles. He will never know the way alcohol, poverty, and disappointment can turn a father into something frightening. Rick grows to love his son with a staggering intensity that scares him; he was not prepared for how deep the young boy would grow roots into his heart. Reliving the past was painful for Rick, and for his family members who were badgered to remember good and bad times. I think he reaches a little peace about his own father as he grows into the role himself. Rick Bragg writes like an angel, albeit a mischievous angel with a sense of humor.



Uncivil Seasons by Michael Malone has beautiful writing, fully realized characters, and intricate plotting. Michael Malone is an Emmy Award winning screenwriter, New York Time Best Selling author, Edgar Award winner, a professor at Duke University and a very talented man. Most of his body of work is literary fiction, he has written only 3 mysteries set in North Carolina. **Uncivil Seasons** is the first of the trilogy. Justin Savile's family ruled as far back as memory served, his granddaddy was the governor, his uncle a senator, his cousin the attorney general. Justin was meant to finish law school then join his family in the halls of power. He graduated law school but instead of joining his powerful clan he developed a taste for alcohol and became a cop. Crime in his social class, at least the sort that resulted in prison time, was uncommon. It is a shock when the wife of Justin's uncle, is found beaten to death. She was a cheerful woman, beloved by many. Assumptions are made about the sort of people who would be involved in her brutal murder and the reasons they employed. It does not take long to find a low-life who fits the profile. Cuddy Mangum is a brilliant detective from the wrong side of the tracks and a Viet Nam veteran to boot. He is determined that justice not supposition rule. The rest of the trilogy, **Time's Witness** and **First Lady**, are also set in North Carolina and are absolutely excellent.

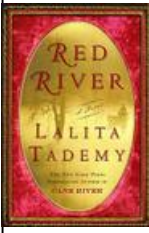


Them by Nathan McCall Barlowe Reed is a good man, albeit a bit touchy about the postal service. He lives in a rundown rental house he would dearly love to make his own, but saving the funds for a down-payment and getting a mortgage are gargantuan challenges for Barlowe. He likes his neighborhood, a stone's throw from the grave of Martin Luther King, near downtown and his job. He likes hanging out with the guys in the neighborhood, he feels at home here. Barlowe has taken his troubled nephew under his wing, helping the young man get his life back on track. Sean and Sandy Gilmore are eager to buy their first home but appalled at what their dollar will purchase in trendy city neighborhoods. Reluctantly they expand their search criteria to include neighborhoods that might be on the cusp of a re-birth. The house next door to Barlowe seems to fit the bill. They can fix it up, wait for the neighborhood to turn around then make a killing. The young couple has their rose colored glasses on too tightly. They are shocked and disappointing the neighborhood is not more welcoming. The neighborhood should be delighted with the improvements being made by the eager young couples moving into the area. And there can be no doubt the improvements are real. Dilapidated houses are given new life. Coffee shops and stores start to flourish. Prices start to rise and the goal of achieving the American dream, of owning your home slips rapidly out of the grasp of folk like Barlowe Reed. The people who have lived in the neighborhood see the Gilmores not as new neighbors who will be a part of the community, but as the end of their homes. Soon they will not be able to afford to live in their neighborhood; all the glitzy new change will not include them. As tensions mount Barlowe and Sandy become reluctant friends, crossing boundaries of color and class. McCall's book is written with razor sharp wit, likable characters, and a sensitively told story of a community in transition. Barlowe is a memorable and likable character.



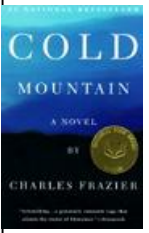
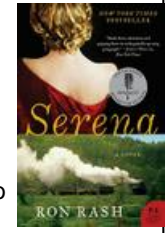
Prayers and Lies by Sherri Wood Emmons. Bethany and Reana Mae forge a strong bond when the cousins are mere babes of 7. Bethany spends the summers with Reana Mae in West Virginia's Coal River valley. Family means a lot in the ramshackle countryside that Bethany sees in summer. It seems an idyllic place of woods, rivers, and peaceful quiet. But there are dark secrets beneath the sylvan surface. As Bethany grows up she realizes family may not always be a safe haven.

Handling Sin by Michael Malone is one of my favorites, I have a fond spot for books with quirky characters and writing that comes alive on the page and Malone is a master. Raleigh Hayes is an upstanding sort of chap, you wouldn't think he would be the type to be called quirky, but wait until Malone finishes with him. I don't want to give away the plot because it is fast and furious, but Raleigh's Father has maneuvered him into a quest. Raleigh ends up ping ponging all over the south accompanied by Mingo. He is menaced by mobsters, meets a legendary jazzman, impersonates a lawman, has encounters of the amorous type, and in general gets into all kinds of trouble. If you like to have fun, this is delicious. **Handling Sin** should put you in the mood to discover Malone's latest book **The Four Corners of the Sky**.



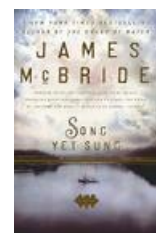
Red River by Lalita Tademy tells the tragic story of the massacre of over 100 black men in Colfax Louisiana in 1873. White supremacists slaughtered them for trying to have a voice in the politics for their community and control of their futures. Tademy's work is historical fiction at its best, based on her own family. It is ultimately an uplifting story. No matter how much humiliation, unfairness, and downright danger they endured, the characters always kept up a belief in themselves, a sense of integrity, and a conviction that with education they would ultimately achieve a better future. Sometimes heart-breaking, and sometimes humorous, it is the story of a family Tademy can be proud to call her own.

Serena by Ron Rash introduces a villainess to rival Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth. George Pemberton brings his lady love home to his timber camp in 1929 North Carolina where they intend to carve out an empire. Serena may be new to the mountain country but she is ruthless and determined. This woman can ride faster, shoot straighter, and plot more malevolently than the guys. But there is friction in the marriage. George fathered an illegitimate child, although the child was on the way before Serena arrived she is ferociously upset. Serena will settle for nothing less than the destruction of mother and child. Not able to bear a child herself, she cannot tolerate George having a child with another. There are enough twists, turns and dark alleys to keep you on the edge of your seat.

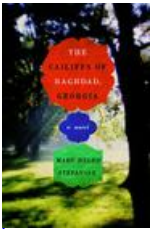


Cold Mountain by Charles Fraser, winner of the National Book Award, chronicles the brutality of the Civil War, showing both the pain of the soldier and the struggle of the women left to fend for themselves. Inman is wounded and fed up with the cruelty of war. Realizing that war is not glory it is instead horror and destruction, he opts out. The walk back to the Smokey Mountains where he hopes Ada is waiting is a quest full of danger, deserters are not treated kindly. Meanwhile Ada is enduring her own struggle. City raised she is not prepared for the hard work necessary to run a farm when all the workers have deserted. Left alone after the death of her father, a minister, she draws on inner strength, changing and growing into the role her circumstances demand. She is aided by a homeless woman, Ruby, who she befriends. The story is moving, tragic, and an excellent reflection on the violent nature of man.

Song Yet Sung by James McBride is a powerful novel set in the years before the Civil War and told through the perspective of the slaves, human property. Liz, an escaped slave, is a seer; she knows that salvation is not achieved by reaching the north. More than a century will be needed for her people to find fair treatment. Liz escapes but is immediately in peril again, hunted by the notorious slave catcher Patty Cannon. McBride is inspired in inserting this real, malevolent character from history into his story. Liz was injured in her escape, giving her a dreamy, confused mien. Other runaways explain the code of the underground railroad to her, giving her a chance to identify safe places to hide. She crosses paths with the slaves of a widowed white woman who does try to treat her slaves with some kindness, a counterpart to the brutal Patty Cannon. The prose is lyrical, the story moving, and the characters memorable.

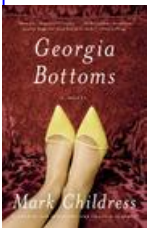
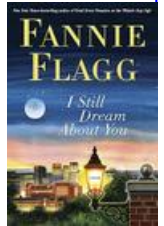


Sweeping Up Glass by Carolyn Wall is set in depression era Kentucky. Olivia's life has not been a bed of roses. Widowed and raising her grandson on her own, she scrapes by living in a shanty that is her home and the grocery store that provides her meager income. Her mother is crazy, her beloved father dead. She doesn't have an easy existence. But when someone starts shooting wolves, Olivia takes action. She is willing to put herself on the line to save the animals. In order to succeed she will have to come to terms with the dark secrets of her past before she becomes the prey along with her grandson. Haunting, powerful, and with a rich complicated plot.



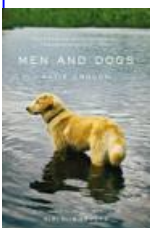
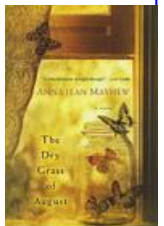
The Cailiffs of Baghdad Georgia by Mary Helen Stefaniak is a delightful story told from the perspective of 11 year old Gladys Cailiff. Depression era Threestep Georgia is a conservative little burg. Miss Spivey, the new teacher, has traveled widely and is full of new ideas. Gladys is quickly smitten with her teacher, a woman who wears hiking boots with her dresses and sneaks cigarettes. Miss Spivey opens up new vistas for the children, teaching them about geography and reading to them from a **Thousand And One Nights**. Force, Gladys's handsome older brother, enlists the help of their black neighbor, Theo, to build a haunted house for Halloween. The party has to be a pre-quel to the holiday because Halloween night is reserved for the Klan. Theo is brilliant, Miss Spivey wants to help get him into college so soon she is tutoring black children before school starts for the white kids. An actively sure to upset the local bigots and cause a chain of unfortunate events. Camels, Klansmen, Baghdad Bazaars all get swirled into the story.

I Still Dream About You by Fannie Flagg is a charmer. Maggie always expected a happy ending. A former Miss Alabama she thought her life was going to take a smooth path but the best laid plans go awry and Maggie's veered off course from the get-go. As the book opens Maggie is 60 and preparing to exit. She feels like a failure, living alone in an apartment, selling real estate in a market that has changed from gentility to cutthroat. I liked this book. Every once in a while it is a good idea to read a book that makes you laugh and feel good while reflecting a bit on life. Maggie's life wasn't turning out the way she wanted, she made some big mistakes right out of the starting gate but that is so like the way things usually happen. Don't we all start out bright eyed and bushy tailed, full of optimism for making something of ourselves? And don't most of us take a few wrong turns along the way (or many wrong turns for some of us)? Can you reclaim some of that promise in the final part of your life? It is a question dealt with beautifully by Kazuo Ishiguro in **The Remains of the Day**. Fannie Flagg has a bit more fun with the premise as her characters careen all over Birmingham. The story is chock full of memorable characters. Maggie's boss Hazel, the dwarf dynamo, who made work fun for her agents. Bonnie, Maggie's partner, who worries about her weight, carries around a tool box in her purse, and wants to go into politics. Even the villains are memorable, Babs Binghamton the Beast of Birmingham, is cutthroat to the bone, willing to cheat and lie to steal listings from the more scrupulous agents. Southern to the core, full of humor, this is a book that will give you a chuckle and make you feel good.



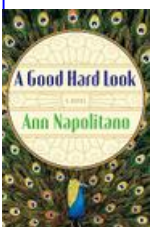
Georgia Bottoms by Mark Childress is set in the small town of Six Points Alabama. Georgia leads a circumspect life in her hometown but my, oh, my does that girl have skeleton's in her closet. All of them come home to roost pretty much at once throwing her well ordered life right out the window. First there is the fiasco with the preacher. Georgia has a nice little routine of entertaining a rotation of gentlemen callers, including the aforementioned preacher, and accepting a handsome honorarium for her efforts. The preacher goes soft on her and wants to confess his sin, a situation that does not sit well with the preacher's wife. And that is just the tip of the ice berg, Georgia is in trouble up to her pretty neck with all her secrets abandoning the closet to cause her grief. Quilts, relatives, all sorts of complications keep her running to stay a step ahead of her troubles.

The Dry Grass of August by Anna Jean Mayhew is set in 1954 and told through the perspective of 13 year old Jubie Watts during a family vacation. Jubie is a lively narrator, a lonely little girl who finds comfort from the black maid, Mary. Jubie's Dad stays home in North Carolina while the family heads south to visit her Mom's brother in Florida. Heading back through Georgia tragedy will strike opening Jubie's eyes to the dark side of human behavior and bigotry. The story has memorable characters in Mary and Jubie, both plucky and willing to stand up for what is right. This is a remarkably powerful debut novel for Anna Jean Mayhew who has written her first book at 71. You go girl!



Men and Dogs by Katie Crouch is set in Charleston. Twenty odd years ago Buzz took his dog, jumped in a boat to go fishing and was never seen again. His children have never come to terms with the unanswered questions of the father's death and the feeling of abandonment. Hannah's marriage is on the skids because of her erratic behavior. And her brother Palmer cannot commit to a long term relationship. Hannah's soon to be ex-husband, Jon, is exhausted by her manic antics, after she falls trying to break into his home he call her mother insisting Hannah head home to Charleston to dry out and mend her ways. Hannah wants closure but sometimes life just doesn't give answers to the big questions and sometimes the right answer was there all along.

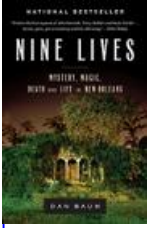
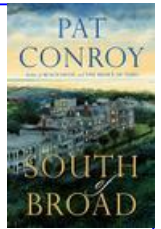
Tomorrow River by Leslie Kagen is set in Virginia in 1969. Shenny's twin sister Woody hasn't spoken a word since the night their mother disappeared a year ago. Judge Carmody has taken to drink since his wife's disappearance, he isn't much help to his daughters. He has forbidden his daughters to leave his property but Shenny is determined to find out what happened to her Mom and discover why her sister has forsaken the spoken word. She is a bright little girl and a determined investigator. Kagen's writing is lively, she makes you like these sisters as they search for truth and justice. Shenny's loyalty, humor, and perseverance make her an especially appealing character.



A Good Hard Look by Ann Napolitano. The raucous screaming of peacocks pierces the night before Cookie Himmel's wedding. Melvin is shocked by the vigor of the bird's voices and wonders what other strangeness he will discover in his bride's Georgia hometown. The peacocks are the pets of the town's resident celebrity, author Flannery O'Connor. Their lives will intersect with profound consequences. Flannery has come home to be cared for by her mother, Lupus has crippled the author. Melvin finds Flannery invigorating despite her disease, she seems so alive and spontaneous to the very proper New Yorker. Even the best of intentions can go tragically awry. This one doesn't release until July, but it was too Southern to leave out and we are happy to pre-order.

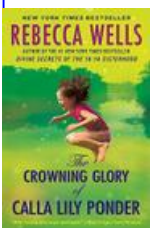
For more Southern literature check our website, sunriverbooks.com. April's newsletter featured books set during the Civil War .

South of Broad by Pat Conroy is another great book set in Charleston. Honey rolls off this man's pen! Pat Conroy's prose is achingly beautiful. The story follows a group of high school friends. Leo is the son of the high school principal and the glue that keeps the group together across two decades. They are buffeted by life's vagaries, shaken by the winds of a hurricane and menaced by a seriously nasty villain. Sumptuous writing, a good story, and a gorgeous setting are all right here.



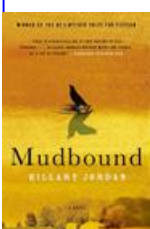
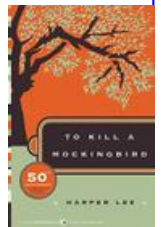
Nine Lives by Dan Baum. Katrina was one of the worst disasters any American city has suffered, but it is not the only story in the Big Easy. Real people live there, with homes, and jobs, and family. **Nine Lives** tells their story, well nine of them anyway, beginning in 1965 with Ronald Lewis and Hurricane Betsy. As the book continues we meet the man who gave Harry Connick one of his first singing gigs, Coroner Frank Minyard. Belinda wants to pull herself out of poverty, get an education and achieve a better life. From dirt poor to wealthy, their common thread is a love for the city of New Orleans. I found these people interesting. Some of them I liked; plucky Belinda, Tootie with his devotion to Mardi Gras, Frank with his need to help. Their stories are well worth telling. I applaud Dan Baum for looking beyond the obvious, the storm, and finding the people of New Orleans.

Tin Roof Blowdown by James Lee Burke. Two Edgar Awards and a nomination for the Pulitzer Prize pay tribute to the ferocious talent of this author. He writes so vividly, I felt like I was in a boat trolling through those eerie flood waters. In the aftermath of the storm there is no electricity, no transportation, no clean water. The city is in chaos, laid open to the predation of looters and men with cruel intent. The infirm and helpless are at the mercy of the elements and those who would prey upon them, a mercy in pitifully short supply. Bodies float down the streets, cars sit submerged, it is a nightmare. Dave Robicheaux and his buddy Cletus Purcel must wade into this chaos to track down a rapist and solve the murder of two looters. James Lee Burke lives in Louisiana and Montana. He cares about New Orleans and it shows in his writing, this is like a cry of anguish for his beloved city. It is one of his best books.



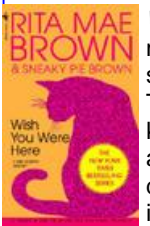
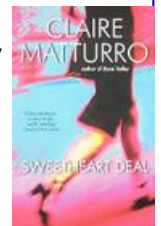
The Crowning Glory of Calla Lily Ponder by Rebecca Wells, takes you to Louisiana before the flood. Calla Lily is raised in the small southern town of La Luna, comforted by the bright moonlight on the La Luna river. She has a happy childhood, loving parents, close friends, and a supportive community of good neighbors. Her mother and father run a dance studio and beauty salon. Calla Lily has an intensely close bond with her mother, she is learning to style hair, help others, and find joy in life from her mother. Death finds its way into Calla Lily's warm, loving childhood and claims her dear mother. Her high school sweetheart is intent on making something of himself, he sets off to Stanford promising to write daily. Calla Lily's heart is broken again when those letters fail to appear. She moves on to New Orleans, makes new friends and learns new lessons about life and the capacity of the heart to heal. Rebecca Wells is best known for **Ya Yas in Bloom** also set in Louisiana.

To Kill A Mockingbird by Harper Lee, winner of the Pulitzer Prize, is one of my favorite books. On its 51st anniversary this masterpiece is just as alive and relevant as the year it was written. A black man is falsely accused of rape. His defense falls heavily on the shoulders of his lawyer, Atticus. Set in 1930's Alabama, it was not a time a white man would be lauded for defending a black. Nor is Atticus' daughter Scout or son Jem immune from public ire over their father's controversial case. Told through Scout's perspective, the story is compelling. I like these characters, I suspect you will too. They have stood the test of time.



Mudbound by Hilary Jordan is a searing tale of life in a small southern town after WWII. It is told from the shifting perspectives of the characters. Laura resigned herself to being an aunt, not a mother. She lived with her parents in Memphis and enjoyed her job teaching school. Hope for a family and home of her own bloomed when her brother's friend Henry starts to call. She marries Henry and settles into raising a family. Henry doesn't share his dreams of owning a farm with Laura; it comes as a shock when he announces his purchase of a farm in a lonely part of the Mississippi Delta. It is an even worse shock when she is told her racist father in law will be living with them, making her life a misery. Henry is full of land fever, the need to own it, farm it, make it produce. He is not a bad man, but he has the attitudes of a southern man of his time and background. His younger brother Jamie is a charmer, life away fighting in WWII has both damaged him and freed him from the attitudes of his home. Ronsel is the son of tenants on Henry's farm. He has been away fighting too. It was a shock to be in Europe where the front door was open to him and he did not have to sit in the back of the bus. It is a shock to return to the south where the back door, down cast eyes, and the back of the bus are his lot. Befriending a white man is dangerous.

Sweetheart Deal by Claire Matturo will keep you amused if you are in the mood for a light mystery. Florida attorney Lilly Cleary has a few quirks. She gets the heebie jeebies from entering a hospital or doctor's office (seems sensible to me) and she isn't too fond of airports. Her mother cornered the market on odd, tossing her kids out as teenagers and locking herself in her house, shunning any contact with the world. Lilly is startled when her brother calls wanting help. Their mother has been arrested for shooting a guy. She never leaves her house, when would she have the opportunity to shoot someone! Lilly grits her teeth and heads home to Bugfest Georgia. Almost as soon as she hits town, she is nearly in an accident caused by a flying peacock. You get the idea.

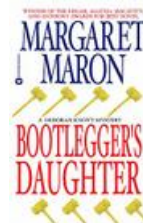


Wish You Were Here by Rita Mae Brown begins the series featuring Mrs. Murphy, a cat, Tucker, a corgi, and Harry the post-mistress of Crozet Virginia. Rita Mae credits her cat Sneaky Pie Brown as co-author so it is no surprise that Mrs. Murphy is the smart cookie in this series. She sounds just like I suspect a cat would sound, definitely calling the shots and leading sweet Tucker into all sorts of mayhem. It is all in a good cause; the two friends Mrs. Murphy and Tucker, have to be on their game to keep their human, Harry, out of trouble. Harry has a few troubles and woes of her own, beyond becoming embroiled in hunting a killer. Her husband left her for another woman leaving her humiliated and blue. Postcards herald trouble in this yarn. A local developer receives a postcard then ends up in his cement mixer, in pieces. A shop owner receives a postcard and he ends up in pieces on the railroad track. The animals are fun but not overly sweet, Harry is a very likable character, and the series has many books to enjoy.

June 2011 Book Clubs

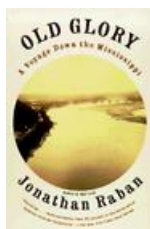
Every year the book clubs concentrate in October on another culture, another country or region. They wanted to add a month that concentrates on a region of the United States, so June is our month of Americana. We will spend the month heading to the 4th of July with a celebration of the literature of a state or region in the USA. 2011 is the 150th anniversary of the Civil War; it seems a good time to visit the South. We are inaugurating a Month of Americana with a month long concentration on literature from the South.

June 6th the Mystery Book Club kicks off our Southern Month with a discussion of *The Bootlegger's Daughter* by Margaret Maron. 18 years ago Gayle Whitehead was a 3 month old infant found dehydrated in a derelict grist mill by the body of her slain mother. Now she wants answers. Janie Whitbread was a beauty and a sweetheart, the apple of her husband's eye, admired by her community. Who would want to kill this vibrant young mother and leave her infant alone in an abandoned grist mill? North Carolina attorney Deborah Knott is running for judge, she has plenty on her mind without playing detective. Deborah was Gayle's babysitter; she suffered a school girl crush on Gayle's father. She has always had a soft spot for the girl and can't bring herself to say no when Gayle asks for help. Deborah will have to use all her wiles to solve this cold case.



The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain is a marvelous story and the Classics Book Club's selection for June 13th. Huck Finn takes an amazing journey on the Mississippi River, a boyhood adventure. It is a lively yarn of escape, danger, and friendship. But it is also the story of how a white boy, Huck, comes to recognize the valor and merit of Jim, a black man. A white boy bonding with a black man during the time of slavery is powerful stuff. Jim is portrayed as an altogether admirable man, a man of courage, compassion, and kindness. Yes the book uses very bad words about people of color, but if you strip the words from the book you strip the power from the story of their suffering.

June 20th the Fiction Book Club discusses *The Prince of Tides* by Pat Conroy, a masterpiece. Pat Conroy is one of the most talented author's of our time and I believe *The Prince of Tides* is his best work. He is a quintessential southern writer and a perfect choice for an exploration of Southern literature. *Prince of Tides* is the story of a dysfunctional family with an abusive father and a sensitive, beaten down, manipulative mother told through the eyes of one of the children. Tom is compelled to reminisce about his family when his twin, Savannah, attempts suicide. Her therapist needs to know where all the family secrets are buried in order to help Savannah. Tom slowly delves into the quagmire of their childhood, revealing the poison at the center. Dripping with southern pathos, gorgeous prose, and wry humor.



The Southern Month of Americana concludes, fittingly, with a look at how a Brit might view the South. June 27th the Travel Essay Book Club discusses *Old Glory* by Jonathan Raban. As a boy Raban was obsessed with Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* and his journey on the great Mississippi River. He grew up to be an elegant, witty, gifted writer who continued to harbor a boyhood dream of the Mississippi. He brings that dream to life heading down the Mississippi in a 16 foot motorboat, trying to see how much of Twain's river still exists. Along the way he has many an adventure, nearly being squashed by a tug boat, barely avoiding a whirlpool. Raban takes a look at this slice of the USA and shares his observations. It is often humorous and always beautifully written.

We hope you can join us to enjoy some of this month's book club selections concentrating on the South. If you would like to read more Southern literature check some of the selections in June's newsletter or at sunriverbooks.com.



[Upcoming Book Club Dates for Monday Evenings at 6:30 PM](#)

July 11th 2011 *Six Suspects* by Vikas Swarup [Mystery Book Club](#)

July 18th 2011 *The Night Birds* by Thomas Maltman [Fiction Book Club](#)

July 25th 2011 *The Way We Live Now* by Anthony Trollope [Classics Book Club](#)

August 1st 2011 *The Man Who Walked Through Time* by Colin Fletcher [Travel Essay Book Club](#)

August 8th 2011 *Stone's Fall* by Ian Pears [Mystery Book Club](#)

August 15th *Devil in the White City* by Erik Larson [Non Fiction Book Club](#)

August 22nd 2011 *Cutting for Stone* by Abraham Verghese [Fiction Book Club](#)

August 29th 2011 *The Razor's Edge* by W. Somerset Maugham [Classics Book Club](#)

September 5th 2011 *The Last Child* by John Hart [Mystery Book Club](#)

September 12th 2011 *Empire of the Summer Moon* by S.C. Gwynne [Non Fiction Book Club](#)

September 19th 2011 *Wolf Hall* by Hilary Mantel [Fiction Book Club](#)

September 26th 2011 *Atlas Shrugged* by Ayn Rand [Classics Book Club](#)

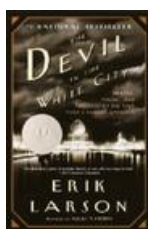
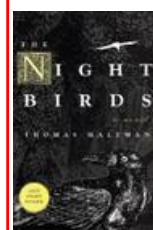
October 3rd 2011 *Spies of the Balkans* by Alan Furst [Mystery Book Club](#) [A Month of Eastern Europe](#)

October 10th 2011 *Zoli* by Colum Mccann [Fiction Book Club](#) [A Month of Eastern Europe](#)

Oct.17th 2011 *Blue River Black Sea* by Andrew Eames [Travel Essay Book Club](#) [A Month of Eastern Europe](#)

October 24th 2011 *The Shooting Party* by Anton Chekov [Classics Book Club](#) [A Month of Eastern Europe](#)

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