



# BiblioFiles

By Ruth Freeman

Readers' Advisor @ the Rowayton Library

## January 2010

We have a grab bag of selections this month. There are a lot of good books out there and with longer, darker days it's just as well to have a lot to choose from!

'The Disappeared' by M.R. Hall introduces Jenny Cooper, a British coroner. Two Asian youths disappeared seven years ago; her efforts to run an impartial inquest are fraught with interference from other police and MI 5. Her instincts are solid but compromised by her panic attacks and difficult home life. Well drawn characters and lots of detail make this a very realistic look at what steps might be taken in combating real and/or perceived terrorist threats. Additional British mysteries that I enjoyed were 'Duty to the Dead' by Charles Todd, which introduces Bess Crawford as a WWI nurse with a message from a dead soldier that upends life in his family's estate, and Susan Hill's 'Vows of Silence', her new mystery featuring Simon Serrailer.

'The Good Soldiers' by Washington Post reporter David Finkel is about the "surge" in Iraq in 2007. The author spent 16 months with the troops in infantry battalion 2-16 led by Col. Ralph Kauzlarich. This is an up close look at what it's like to climb into your Humvee every day and be on the lookout for roadside explosive devices that won't always be found in time. The stress comes right off the pages, and the human toll, on the 2/16 soldiers, their families at home, and the Iraqis, is huge. Recommended for its clear reporting on one section of the war.

Winner of the 2009 National Book Award for fiction, Colum McCann's 'Let the Great World Spin' is truly memorable. Set in New York City in 1974 it begins with Philippe Petit's high wire walk between the World Trade Center towers. The story shifts to various people watching below and poignantly interweaves chance meetings that draw diverse characters together. A grieving mother from Park Ave., hookers from the Bronx, artists, and two Irish brothers are the major characters whose lives and loves swirl through the book. McCann is a gifted writer with a real ear for dialogue.

'The Vintage Caper' is the latest by Peter Mayle, and is charming and diverting. Sam Levitt, a reformed rascal, now hires out to high end insurance companies to solve crimes that left unsolved would lead to multi million dollar payouts. The theft of a huge wine collection is the precipitating event in the chase that occupies this book. The story takes place mostly in



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Marseille, allowing for humorous asides about the French. Lots of wine and beautiful women round out a delightful romp.

'The Draining Lake' by Arnaldur Indridason is an excellent thriller set in Iceland, with a back story about Icelandic students in Leipzig, East Germany in the early '70's. There is a lot of interesting Cold War history and intriguing characters. Inspector Erlendur and his team are both dogged and winsome and the strong sense of place adds to the pleasure of crime solving in a new setting. 'Arctic Chill' is his next book in the series and is a great follow up. This series will appeal to fans of Henning Mankell.

'Iron River' is T. Jefferson Parker's latest Charlie Hood thriller. In this book Charlie is on loan from the LA Sherriff's Dept. to a squad at the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms that works the California Mexico border. The "iron river" is the stream of weaponry that crosses the border, arming the drug cartels and wrecking havoc on the border towns. The book is very topical and in true Parker fashion, laced with some strange human capabilities that lift it above the expected.

'A Matter of Class' by Mary Balogh is a Regency romance novel with a brain. It's short and has a spunky heroine who will leave you smiling. The book is long on spirited dialogue, short on action, highly recommended for those who like their romances well written and full of surprises.

We have a lot of new cookbooks, two of which stand out for offering recipes guaranteed to entertain family and friends through the long winter. Mark Peel, the owner of Campanile, has written 'New Classic Family Dinners'. It has accessible recipes with enough optional twists to interest all levels of cooks. Gordon Ramsay, known now to almost everyone from his TV show, has written 'Cooking for Friends'. I have especially enjoyed the 'Savory Pies and Tarts' section but the whole book has great recipes.

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