



BiblioFiles

By Ruth Freeman

Readers' Advisor @ the Rowayton Library

February 2011

Thankfully there are lots of good books on the shelves to help readers through the snowy winter! Here are our favorites for this month:

'Caribou Island' by Charles Vann is both bleak and beautiful. Set in present day Alaska it's the story of Irene and Gary, in their mid 50's, married with two adult children. At Gary's insistence they are building a cabin on an island in the lake near where they live. The project is beset with difficulties from the start, echoing the growing tensions in the marriage. Their daughter Rhoda is the ballast in the family, unlike her part time fisherman brother, but under pressure herself as she struggles to avoid making the same mistakes as her mother. Vann writes about Alaska like the native he is, the country and climate are a major character too. This is by no means an uplifting book, but hard to put down.

'A Lonely Death' is the new mystery by Charles Todd. The Detective Ian Rutledge series goes from strength to strength with the latest entry. Veterans of WWI from the town of Eastfield are being murdered and the overwhelmed constable calls in Scotland Yard. Rutledge's task is to find the connections among the victims that will lead him to the murderer. Excellent atmosphere and continuing character development make this a winner.

We have a lot of great, new non fiction as well:

'The Pioneer Woman, Black Heels to Tractor Wheels' by Ree Drummond is the long awaited memoir of her harlequin romance with Marlboro Man. Fans of her web site and 'The Pioneer Woman' cookbook will relish the details of their courtship, marriage and first years on their Oklahoma ranch. One of the best things about the author is her terrific sense of humor. Living on a ranch surely requires the ability to laugh while you pull your boots out of piles of manure. This is a very engaging read.

'Learning to Die in Miami', the new memoir by Carlos Eire, picks up where 'Waiting for Snow in Havana' left off. Deposited with a foster family in Miami by the pedro pan airlift, he is separated from his parents and siblings for the first time in his life. Eleven years old and facing a new world without his family support system – the challenges are legion. The hatred of Castro and his regime permeates the book and sometimes gets in the way of the story, as



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understandable as his feelings are. You marvel at the resilience of children and gain a real appreciation for the huge adjustment that has to be made by immigrants.

‘Growing a Farmer’ (How I Learned to Live Off the Land), a memoir by Kurt Timmermeister, should be required reading for anyone who dreams of owning a small farm. Each chapter addresses an aspect of running his small multipurpose farm on an island off Seattle. He is honest about his mistakes as well as the pleasures of a rural lifestyle. He is refreshingly unsentimental about the practical process of growing both vegetable and animal foodstuffs and how difficult it is to turn a profit as a small farmer. This book will appeal to readers who love to garden and are interested in how their food is raised – highly recommended.

‘Agent X’ by Noah Boyd is the second installment in the Steve Vail series that began with ‘The Bricklayer’. Vail is an ex FBI agent who gets roped in to help his old employers solve exceptionally tricky cases. He’s a great character, there’s lots of well written dialogue and the suspense is relentless. In this book he tangles with Russians and home grown traitors. Kate Bannon is back as his sidekick, and their repartee is terrific.

‘The Sentry’ by Robert Crais is the new Joe Pike novel. Set in LA, the title establishes his role as a protector of a young woman and her uncle who are refugees from Hurricane Katrina. Crais is a master plot developer and Pike is at his inscrutable best. The city of Los Angeles is one of the stars of the book; the atmosphere is palpably realistic. There is violence whenever you have Pike taking care of business but it is not cartoonish. I can’t say the same for the escapades ‘The Border Lords’, T. Jefferson Parker’s latest book. It was disappointing on many levels and can’t be recommended. We hope that this usually talented author will get back on track with his next Charlie Hood novel.

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