

6-1-2004

## Book Marks

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### Recommended Citation

University, Furman (2004) "Book Marks," *Furman Magazine*: Vol. 47 : Iss. 2 , Article 16.  
Available at: <https://scholarexchange.furman.edu/furman-magazine/vol47/iss2/16>

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# BOOK MARKS

Featuring summaries of books written by Furman faculty and alumni, as well as reviews of books recommended by faculty and staff as "good reads."

## RECOMMENDED

Stephen Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror* (John Wiley & Sons, 2003). The author, a veteran *New York Times* correspondent, argues that we can understand the motivations of Islamic terrorists by reviewing the history of American foreign policy. He believes that the 1953 CIA-backed coup in Iran was an important trigger of Mideast animosity toward America. Guided by Kermit Roosevelt, one of FDR's grandsons, coup leaders replaced the popular Mohammad Mossadegh with Reza Pahlavi (who assumed the royal title "Shah"). More than two decades of repression followed, ending in 1979 with the overthrow of the Shah by Ayatollah Khomeini. As in Iraq, the majority of Iran's Muslims are Shiites. They stress the importance of just leaders and the potential need to accept communal pain and/or martyrdom to attain such leaders. American policymakers failed to grasp the influence of Shiite tenets in Iran. Unfortunately, we seem to be making the same mistake in Iraq, something this book makes disturbingly clear.

— Scott Henderson,  
*Education*

Richard G. Klein, *The Dawn of Human Culture* (John Wiley & Sons, 2002), and Ian Tattersall, *Becoming Human: Evolution and Human Uniqueness* (Harvest Books, 1999). Paleoanthropology buffs will enjoy these books. Klein's work races through the first 5.9 million years of prehistory to focus upon the vast speech buff that evidently separated the Neanderthals from Cro-Magnons. Much the same story is told in Tattersall's book, which begins with the "creative explosion" of the Upper

Paleolithic era, considers ape intelligence, devotes two chapters to earlier hominids, and concludes with a thoroughly enjoyable drubbing of evolutionary psychology. Both Klein and Tattersall are "splitters" who believe that fossils with pronounced differences in shape should be classified as separate species (as opposed to "lumpers" who group fossils into few species and see most differences as variations within the same group). Both authors assign the Neanderthals to a separate species. Overall, Tattersall covers more ground, has more to say, and is less inclined to argue away inconvenient dates.

— Brian Siegel, *Sociology*

Derrick Bell, *Silent Covenants: Brown v. Board of Education and the Unfulfilled Hopes for Racial Reform* (Oxford University Press, 2004). The debate over *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) continues. The author, an NAACP lawyer in the 1960s, has long been dissatisfied with the decision that mandated integration of the nation's public schools. Here he imagines a different *Brown* opinion: the Supreme Court upholds the old "separate but equal" standard but rigorously demands "equality." This, he argues, would have kept African-American students in well-functioning schools but would have required states to fund all schools equally. The students could then have reaped the benefits of same-race education without the stigma and bigotry that desegregation nurtured. Such a system also would have enabled both blacks and whites to begin to dismantle the "silent covenants," or the real barriers to racial justice in our society: agreements unspoken but clearly understood, convergences of powerful interests,

and involuntary sacrifices of rights made by the powerless. Many who celebrated *Brown's* 50th anniversary will not agree with Bell, but his argument should stimulate debate over the continuing problem of racial justice.

— Sean Patrick O'Rourke,  
*Communication Studies*

George Crile, *Charlie Wilson's War: The Extraordinary Story of the Largest Covert Operation in History* (Atlantic Monthly Press, 2003). This is the story of America's covert support of the *mujadiheen*, the loosely knit army of Afghani tribesmen who, with the help of the CIA, defeated the Soviet army in the 1980s. The story revolves around two unlikely Americans: Wilson, a "whiskey-swilling, skirt-chasing," anti-communist zealot and Democratic congressman from East Texas, and Gus Avrakotos, a foul-mouthed, street-tough son of Greek immigrants from Aliquippa, Pa., who ran covert CIA operations against the communists, first in Greece in the 1960s and then in Afghanistan. The book, at its best when discussing the *real politik* of the Cold War, offers a detailed account of the protagonists' machinations and manipulations of Congress, the CIA and international relations. Although Wilson conducts the "most successful covert operation in history," Crile shows in his epilogue that by the 1990s the freedom fighters Wilson assisted had transformed into the Islamic fundamentalists we know today as the Taliban and Al-Qaeda.

— Richard Letteri,  
*Communication Studies*

## FROM ALUMNI

Robert Harris '76, *When Good People Write Bad Sentences: 12 Steps to Better Writing Habits* (St. Martin's Griffin, 2004). The publisher touts this book as "help for writers who can admit they have a problem." Its author, who has written 10 books ranging from technical guides to a novel, is a longtime technical/business writer who lives in Durham, N.C. The book offers a list of warning signs that could indicate that you suffer from malescribism, or addiction to bad writing. It goes on to

identify common writing mistakes (wordiness, formality, incompleteness) and provides guidelines on how to fix them. As Harris says in the introduction, "This book challenges readers to take an objective look at themselves and their writing and begin the process of change." Visit his Web site, [www.rhauthor.com](http://www.rhauthor.com).

Rob Suggs '78, *The Suggs Book of Family Tales: Real Life Stories of Wit and Wisdom* (InterVarsity Press, 2004). According to the publisher, this book takes a look at "an ordinary family, probably a lot like your family. . . . What's extraordinary is Suggs' spiritual perception and story-telling ability. The result is a winsome collection of tales filled with laughter, love and profound meaning that sheds new light on God's precious gift of family." The author, a freelance writer, illustrator and cartoonist in Atlanta, has won Evangelical Press Association awards for writing and for illustration. He contributes cartoons to *Leadership Journal* and is creator of the comic strip "Brother Biddle." His other books include *It Came from Beneath the Pew* and *Preacher from the Black Lagoon*. Visit his Web site, [www.robsuggs.com](http://www.robsuggs.com).

## FROM FACULTY

Richard E. Prior, *The Everything® Learning Latin Book* (Adams Media Corporation, 2003). Latin is not a dead language! Modern-day English owes much to its Latin roots, and the publisher states that this book "builds upon what you already know about English to teach you the basics of Latin grammar, usage, and vocabulary. Through step-by-step instruction, practical exercises and cultural information, *The Everything® Learning Latin Book* will have you speaking like a Roman in no time" — while developing a stronger vocabulary and a better understanding of grammatical principles. The author is associate professor of classics at Furman; the book is part of the *Everything®* how-to series.