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Book Marks

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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.”

FROM ALUMNI

Suzanne Rhodes Draayer '73, *Cancones de España: Songs of Nineteenth-Century Spain* (Scarecrow Press, 2003). The publisher says this anthology marks the first collection of Spanish songs from the 1800s. The 23 songs in the collection represent “an exciting opportunity to explore the gems of Spanish vocal repertoire. Songs have been selected by virtue of the quality of the poetry, the artistry of the song setting, the beauty of the melody, the variety of the accompaniment, and those with an indigenous flavor.” The author, who teaches at Winona State University in Minnesota, frequently performs Spanish vocal literature and has written extensively on the subject.

Robert Whitlow '76, *Life Support* (W Publishing Group, 2003). The fourth novel from Whitlow, an attorney who has been called “the John Grisham of the Christian market,” is described by the publisher as “a combination of intrigue and inspiration.” The story centers on a legal fight over a man who is paralyzed and comatose, with his wife seeking to cut off life support and his father opposing her wishes. “Caught up in the turmoil,” says the publisher, “is a young female attorney who takes the case and finds out that her client’s husband isn’t the only person in need of life-saving measures.” Whitlow received the 2001 Christy Award, which recognizes “Christian novels of exceptional quality and impact,” for *The Trial*.

Kellie Stenzel '87, *The Women’s Guide to Consistent Golf* (Thomas Dunne, 2002). Targeted at the intermediate player, this follow-up to Stenzel’s first book, *The Women’s Guide to Golf* (2000), is praised by *Booklist* as “a fine instructional for average golfers hoping to improve.” The author,

a teaching professional and contributor to *Golf for Women* magazine, played on the Furman squad that finished second in the 1987 NCAA tournament. *Booklist* says that much of the book is as applicable to men as it is to women and adds, “Her advice on the swing is straightforward and clearly explained, and she doesn’t make the common mistake of trying to teach average players to swing like Tiger Woods.” Stenzel is at work on a third instructional book.

Erin Mahan '92, *Kennedy, de Gaulle and Western Europe* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003). The publisher says that the author, who holds a doctorate from the University of Virginia, “revises prevailing interpretations of Franco-American relations during the early 1960s that either chastise de Gaulle for anti-Americanism or Kennedy for imposing U.S. policies on Europe. Summoning a wide range of French and American archival sources, this book demonstrates that the structure and dynamics of the Franco-American relationship during this period were embedded in complex multilateral relationships within the Western alliance.” Mahan works for the Department of State in Washington.

FROM FACULTY

Tony Caterisano and Mike Gentry, *A Chance to Win: A Complete Guide to Physical Training for Football* (Iron Palace Company LLC, 2003). This book focuses on all aspects of physical training for football, including strength development through resistance training, speed and agility training. Caterisano is a world champion powerlifter and professor of exercise physiology at Furman, and Gentry is head strength and conditioning coach at Virginia Tech. They address such topics as nutrition, motivation and training cycle development, while offering week-by-week programs

at three levels of experience (beginner, intermediate and advanced). The book is written at a level appropriate for coaches, parents, or players from middle school through college.

Edgar V. McKnight, *Reading the Bible Today: A 21st Century Appreciation of Scripture* (Smyth & Helwys, 2003). According to the publisher, McKnight, the William R. Kenan, Jr., Professor Emeritus of Religion, “presents the results of four decades of searching and study for readers who want to relate their Christian faith to contemporary knowledge and insight into the nature and significance of the Bible.” Phyllis Tribble of Wake Forest Divinity School says that the book “provides a thoughtful and balanced introduction to the Bible in its ancient settings, diverse translations and contemporary uses.” Sandra Hack Polaski '86, who teaches at Baptist Theological Seminary, says that McKnight “explains how and why an understanding of the Bible as an historical and literary document is necessary and contributes to a fuller appreciation of the Bible as Scripture.”

RECOMMENDED

Simon Singh, *Fermat’s Enigma: The Epic Quest to Solve the World’s Greatest Mathematical Problem* (Random House, 1997). Books about math problems are not usually riveting, but this one is a page-turner — about numbers. Singh focuses on the 350-year attempt to solve an equation posed by the French mathematician Pierre de Fermat. Fermat’s “enigma” appears relatively harmless: $x^n + y^n = z^n$. Singh, using extremely clear prose, illustrates why the solution to this equation is anything but simple. Along the way, he explains group theory, quintic equations, modular forms and other concepts. He also provides a brilliant discussion of Kurt Gödel’s theorem of undecidable propositions. Individuals interested in problem-solving strategies will find Singh’s descriptions of induction, contradiction and conjectures especially useful, and virtually every reader will be enlightened by Singh’s account. It reveals the complexity and the

beauty of mathematics, and even readers who have always found math challenging will be able to follow the story to its fascinating conclusion.

— Scott Henderson, *Education*

Richard Russo, *Empire Falls* (Vintage Books, 2001). Empire Falls, Maine, is a decaying textile town mostly owned and thoroughly controlled by Francine Whiting, an iron-willed widow. This Pulitzer Prize-winning novel focuses on her relationship with Miles Roby, the manager of her Empire Grill, a down-at-the-heels, blue-collar bar and restaurant. Roby is decent, competent and loving, but he drifts, unable to confront or escape. His world includes his adored 16-year-old daughter, Tick; his father, an irresponsible “sempty-something” ne’er-do-well; his ex-wife, Jeanine; and friends and enemies from childhood. Although primarily set in the mid-1990s, when the town’s factories are vacant, its high school football team a perennial loser and its Roman Catholic church near closing, the novel effectively intertwines events from 30 years earlier with those of the present. With its vivid characters, satiric humor, absorbing atmosphere and deft plotting, *Empire Falls* is a marvelous read.

— Judith Bainbridge, *English*

Paul Wilson, editor, *Prague: A Traveler’s Literary Companion* (Travelers Literary Companions, 1995). This book offers about 25 essays or short stories by various Czech authors in which the setting is Prague. Arranged chronologically within various topics (each topic being a separate neighborhood of the city), the book serves as a great introduction to many Czech authors not named Kafka (who himself is represented), such as Karl Pecha, Gustav Meyrink and Jachym Topol. In particular, Pecha’s “The Little Bulldog” captures the specifics of a place and time — Mala Strana in the 1970s — and the universality of human personalities. This is a handsome book with good translations and a strong section of notes about the authors and translators. A fine book to have in Prague or on one’s bed stand.

— David Spear, *History*