

The Book Rack Newsletter

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Vol 9, #9

September 2016

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<http://www.thebookrackqc.com/>
BookRackQC@Gmail.com

Reading Trivia for September

William Sidney Porter, whom we know as O. Henry, spent some time in Honduras. What was he doing there?

Did you know?

F. Scott Fitzgerald modeled his most famous creation, Jay Gatsby, on himself, but mostly on a Long Island bootlegger called Max Gerlach.

September Holidays and Events at The Book Rack:

- Self-Improvement Month
- National Courtesy Month
- 5 – Labor Day – The Book Rack will be Open
- 6 – Read a Book Day – Relax with a good book from The Book Rack
- 8 – International Literacy Day
- 11 – No News Is Good News Day
- 16 – American Legion Day

16 – Working Parents Day
17 – Constitution Day
21 – International Peace Day
23 – Dog in Politics Day – Take your pick!
28 – National Good Neighbor Day

Free Verse is a regular, monthly, feature by one of our wonderful Quad Cities area local authors. Each month we enjoy writing by a different talent. These articles and poems are on a variety of topics bound to be of interest to many of our readers. Please help spread the word by forwarding the newsletter to others. Give these folks as wide an audience as possible, please.

This month's Free Verse article is written by Local Author Joan Mauch

Left-handed in a right-handed world

by Joan Mauch

Hello. My name is Joan. And I'm a Southpaw.

It may seem odd admitting something like that in public when there's no addiction involved and no possibility of reform. The truth of the matter is I'm a member of a minority that is discriminated against in ways most people never consider. And despite the compassion displayed for most minorities these days, there are no legislation or federal grants available to make our lives easier.

I've been left-handed all my life despite the best efforts of my parents and

teachers. When I was a child, the prevailing thought was that left-handers were either obstinate or influenced by the devil. I realize you probably think I'm exaggerating. But you're wrong.

As a toddler, Mom tied my arm behind my back, thinking that would solve the "problem". In first grade, the teacher slapped me in an attempt to "straighten me out". She thought my left-handedness was evidence of willfulness that had to be taken in hand. Such treatment came to an abrupt halt the day I went to the blackboard to solve an arithmetic problem and was unable to write with either hand. Messing with my natural orientation had muddled my brain to the point of confusion.

I was taught to write by placing the paper slanted toward the right hand, forcing me to twist my hand into an awkward position in order to see what I was writing. As a result, the ink left ugly smears on my hand and the paper making my work appear sloppy.

Although I was no longer yelled at, smacked or tied up, over the years I experienced ongoing discrimination. School desks were designed for those of the right-handed persuasion. Hours of note-taking and exams without proper support for my arm resulted in an aching shoulder and a hand cramped from the unnatural curve I was forced to use.

Unfortunately the design of desks was the only the tip of the iceberg. It seemed

everything in life was designed for use by right-handers: spiral notebooks, scissors—even golf clubs.

As a teenager working behind the counter at an ice cream parlor, I had to dip ice cream using a right-handed scoop. Since the lever was on the wrong side it made the work difficult not to mention awkward. Plus it drove my boss crazy and he lost no opportunity to let me know.

Left-handers are forced to adapt to a right-handed world all day, every day. The most recent reminder of my "handicap" came after I became an author and began to do book signings. With every book I sign, I must struggle with the binding so as not to smear the message.

Courtesy of the internet I discovered only twelve to fifteen percent of people are left-handed. But I found out that I'm in good company: Five of the last seven presidents are left-handed including: Gerald Ford, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama. Some famous—and infamous—lefties include: Albert Einstein, Leonardo da Vinci, Jack the Ripper, Napoleon Bonaparte, Joan of Arc, the Queen Mother, Prince William, Winston Churchill, Tom Cruise, Morgan Freeman, Judy Garland, Chewbacca the Wookie, Jimi Hendrix and Sir Paul McCartney.

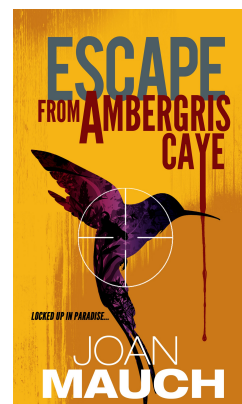
By the way, August 13 is International Left-Handers Day, an annual event to increase public awareness of the advantages and disadvantages of being left-

handed. This event is celebrated worldwide and includes left vs right sports matches, a left-handed tea party, pubs using left-handed corkscrews where patrons drink and play pub games with the left hand only, and “Lefty Zones” where left-handers’ creativity, adaptability and sporting prowess are celebrated, while right-handers are encouraged to try out everyday left-handed objects to see how awkward using the wrong equipment really is. More information on left-handed living and products can be found on Thelefthandersday.com a website dedicated to improving the lives of Southpaws.

I began writing this column as something of a joke, but as I got further into it I realized I was onto something. The plight of left-handers has been routinely ignored by most of the world. So if you have one in your family circle, let them know you appreciate the extra effort they’re required to put into everything they do.

Several years ago, my son brought me a wall-hanging from California that contained an anonymous, but well-known quote. It read, *“If the right side of the brain controls the left side of the body then only left-handed people are in their right mind.”*

I rest my case.



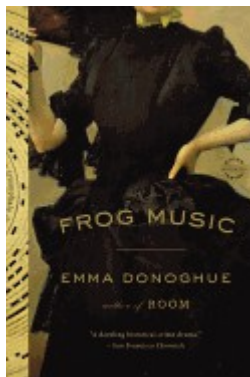
At age six Joan Mauch excitedly recognized the letter "A" in her mom's newspaper and has been fascinated with the printed word ever since. For most of her professional life she's been involved with writing in one form or another ranging from writing news releases to promotional copy writing. Over the years she became something of a vagabond, having lived in Washington State, Oregon, Illinois and most recently Iowa, working at everything from teaching to selling real estate. When she isn't writing, Joan enjoys visiting her son in Tampa, Florida or just hanging out with family and friends. ESCAPE FROM AMBERGRIS CAYE is her fourth novel. Visit her website at joanmauch.com or facebook.com/joanmauch.author

Book Reviews

Read a good or bad book lately? Send us a book review and we'll include it in the next newsletter! (We do reserve the right to edit – just in case it was a really bad book and you use really bad language!)

Our first book review is also by Jodie Toohey and first appeared August 12, 2015 in Jodie's blog, <http://bookreviewsbyjodiet.blogspot.com/>.

FROG MUSIC by Emma Donoghue



[Frog Music](#) is historical fiction based on a murder that occurred in the sweltering summer of 1876 in San Francisco, California. I found it on Amazon with a keyword search involving American historical fiction and murder while doing a comparison for marketing my own

historical fiction book, *Taming the Twisted*.

The story is told in the present tense from the third person limited point of view; the main character is Blanche. The book grabbed me violently in the first few pages with its description of the brutal murder which immediately sets up the mystery I wanted to keep reading to solve. It goes back and forth in time with essentially two chronological starting points. It starts at the murder and also a few weeks prior when Blanche meets the murdered person, Jenny. The story switches back and forth between these two times, though they are both moving forward until, toward the end of the book, when the first story line (the meeting) catches up with the beginning of the later story line (the murder). I found this way of storytelling interesting and both kept me engaged. I had not trouble orienting myself in the story's time.

Given the main character's profession, the number of sex scenes shouldn't come as a surprise, and they are told as tastefully as can be. And unclimaxed, with which I find many authors tend to struggle.

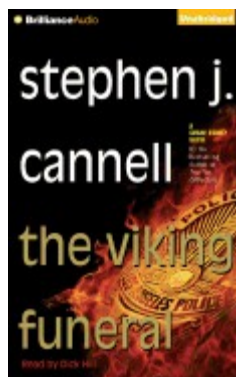
As mentioned, *Frog Music* is based on a real murder and the real witnesses who testified at the inquest about the murder. The characters are authentically human with both good and undesirable qualities. I found it difficult to completely love or completely hate any of them which testifies to their dynamics. Ultimately, *Frog Music* is a story of love between a mother and her child and how it overtakes the mother, even if at first she doesn't want it to.

The book was obviously well-researched and I liked the Afterword that talked about the real people and the way San Francisco appeared in 1876.

I read this book within a little less than a week. So, on a can't-put-it-down-scale of one for I couldn't even finish it to ten for I was up until the wee morning hours, I give it an eight and a half.

The rest are by me:

The Viking Funeral by Stephen J. Cannell (2002)



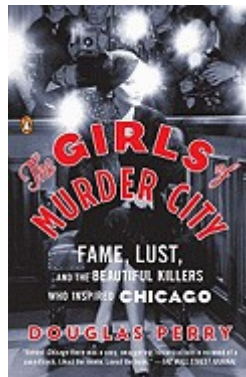
Driving along the freeway, LAPD Sergeant Shane Scully glances over and sees at the wheel of a neighboring car his oldest friend and LAPD colleague, Jody

Dean. Why is Scully so surprised? Because it's been two years since Jody committed suicide. Now Shane is confronted by the bizarre truth: Jody and five other cops thought to be dead are anything but. Originally sent deep undercover to bust an extremely violent international criminal network, they've gone bad. Calling themselves the Vikings, they are LAPD's worst nightmare: dangerous rogue cops who know how the system works.

Full of the high-wire suspense, money laundering, drug cartels and wonderful characters, "The Viking Funeral" brings Shane Scully back into action, pitting him against his closest childhood friend, and endangering the life of the woman he loves.

I've reviewed other Cannell classics and highly recommended each one. The Viking Funeral is another very good read, but not at the level of the previous ones I've read. It's not a huge difference, but a little slip none the less. I give it a B and still think Cannell books are very worth the search to find them. Since his death in 2010 his books have become scarce, but if you can find them you'll enjoy your reward of reading a good book.

The Girls of Murder City, Fame, Lust, and the Beautiful Killers Who Inspired "Chicago" by Douglas Perry (2010)



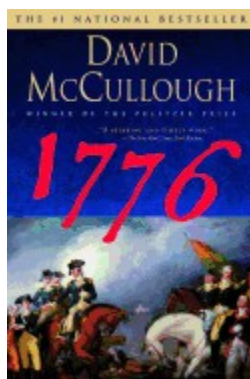
Have you seen the 2002 movie "Chicago" with Rene Zellweger, Catherine Zeta-Jones and Richard Gere? Whether you have or not this is a very interesting historical look at the actual murders that formed the basis for the movie.

With a thrilling, fast-paced narrative, award-winning journalist Douglas Perry vividly captures the sensationalized circus atmosphere that gave rise to the concept of the celebrity criminal- and gave Chicago its most famous story. The Girls of Murder City recounts two scandalous, sex-fueled murder cases and how an intrepid "girl reporter" named Maurine Watkins turned the beautiful, media-savvy suspects-"Stylish Belva" and "Beautiful Beulah"-into the talk of the town. Fueled by rich period detail and a cast of characters who seemed destined for

the stage, *The Girls of Murder City* is a crackling tale that simultaneously presents the freewheeling spirit of the Jazz Age and its sober repercussions. In the tradition of Karen Abbott's *Sin in the Second City*, Perry vividly captures Jazz Age Chicago and the sensationalized circus atmosphere that gave rise to the concept of the celebrity criminal.

Claudia & I listened to the audio book and both thoroughly enjoyed it. I give it a B+. If you like true crime with the focus on the personalities rather than the carnage, this is a book you should read.

1776 by David McCullough (2005)



America's beloved and distinguished historian presents, in a book of breathtaking excitement, drama, and narrative force, the stirring story of the year of our nation's birth, 1776, interweaving, on both sides of the Atlantic, the actions and decisions that led Great Britain to undertake a war against her rebellious colonial subjects and that placed America's survival in the hands of George Washington.

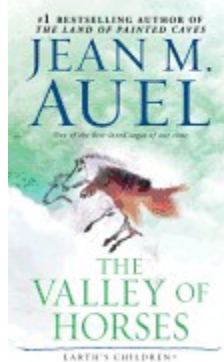
In this masterful book, David McCullough tells the intensely human story of those who marched with General George Washington in the year of the Declaration of Independence when the whole American cause was riding on their success, without which all hope for independence would have been dashed and the noble ideals of the Declaration would have amounted to little more than words on paper.

Based on extensive research in both American and British archives, "1776" is a powerful drama written with extraordinary narrative vitality. It is the story of Americans in the ranks, men of every shape, size, and color, farmers, schoolteachers, shoemakers, no-accounts, and mere boys turned soldiers. And it is the story of the King's men, the British commander, William Howe, and his highly disciplined redcoats who looked on their rebel foes with contempt and fought with a valor too little known.

McCullough has twice won the Pulitzer Prize for literature and this book again

demonstrates what a wonderful writer he is. If you enjoy history you can't miss 1776! It gets an A in anyone's ratings.

The Valley of Horses, Earth's Children #2 by Jean Auel (1984)



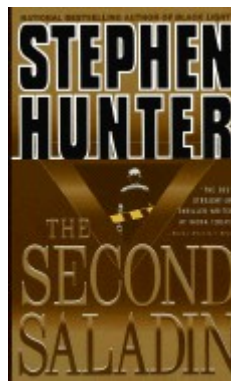
This unforgettable odyssey into the distant past carries us back to the awesome mysteries of the exotic, primeval world of The Clan of the Cave Bear, and to Ayla, now grown into a beautiful and courageous young woman.

Cruelly cast out by the new leader of the ancient Clan that adopted her as a child, Ayla leaves those she loves behind and travels alone through a stark, open land filled with dangerous animals but few people, searching for the Others, tall and fair like herself. The short summer gives her little time to look, and when she finds a sheltered valley with a herd of hardy steppe horses, she decides to stay and prepare for the long glacial winter ahead. Living with the Clan has taught Ayla many skills but not real hunting. She finally knows she can survive when she traps a horse, which gives her meat and a warm pelt for the winter, but fate has bestowed a greater gift, an orphaned foal with whom she develops a unique kinship.

One winter extends to more; she discovers a way to make fire more quickly and a wounded cave lion cub joins her unusual family, but her beloved animals don't fulfill her restless need for human companionship. Then she hears the sound of a man screaming in pain. She saves tall, handsome Jondalar, who brings her a language to speak and an awakening of love and desire, but Ayla is torn between her fear of leaving her valley and her hope of living with her own kind.

This is another really good Auel installment in her Earth's Children series. The descriptions of the scenery, plants and animals allows you to visualize Auel's perception of the Earth of early humans. It's another long book, but it kept me engaged and I give it a B+.

The Second Saladin by Stephen Hunter (1982)



A second chance..

In the windswept sands of the Middle East, Paul Chardy fought side by side with Ulu Beg: one, a charismatic, high-strung CIA covert warrior, the other a ferocious freedom fighter. Then Chardy fell into the hands of the enemy, and Beg was betrayed. Now the two men are about to meet again.

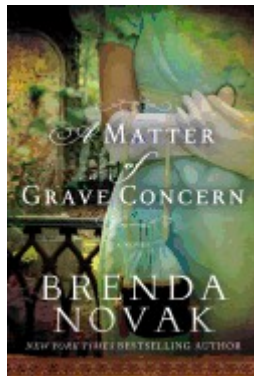
A second gun...

Beg has come over the Mexican border under a hail of bullets--determined to assassinate a leading American political figure and avenge his people's betrayal. The CIA wants Chardy to stop the hit. Chardy wants to save Beg's life.

Between the two men is a tragic past, a failed mission, and a woman who knew them in war--and who knows their secrets now. Around both men is a conspiracy of lies and violence that reaches back to the Cold War. But as Beg moves in for his kill and as Chardy breaks loose from his handlers, a terrible truth begins to emerge: somewhere, someone wants both men to die."

I give it a B+ and solid recommendation. It was an intriguing read. If you like David Morrell, Steven Coonts or Robert Crais you'll probably like Stephen Hunter.

A Matter of Grave Concern by Brenda Novak (2014)



When Maximillian Wilder hides his noble identity and joins the notorious body snatchers known as the London Supply Company, the last thing on his mind is

love. He's worried about Madeline, his vanished half sister, who was last seen in the company of Jack Hurtsill, the gang's conscienceless leader. Raiding graveyards, stealing corpses, and selling them to medical colleges as dissection material is dirty work, but Max knows he must gain Jack's trust. He's determined to find out what happened to Madeline and to bring Jack to justice if she was murdered for the coin her body could earn.

Beautiful, spirited Abigail Hale, daughter of the surgeon at Aldersgate School of Medicine, detests the challenging, hard-bargaining Max almost as much as Jack. But she must procure the necessary specimens if she is to save the college and her father's career. She believes she is going to be successful until Jack double-crosses her. Then she's swept into a plot of danger and intrigue, one where Max must intervene to protect her, no matter the risk to his plan or his heart."

This is a very well crafted combination of suspense, mystery and romance set in 19th century London. The unsavory body snatching business as the setting adds a unique aspect to the story. I found the book very engaging and give it a B. Don't read historical romance?? This book may change your perspective. Give the genre a chance and you may open your reading choices to a whole new dimension.

Reading Trivia for July

William Sidney Porter, whom we know as O. Henry, spent some time in Honduras. What was he doing there?

Answer: Fleeing prosecution on embezzlement charges. When he returned to the US, he served time in jail - where he began writing the adventure stories that made him famous.

Upcoming New Releases:

Check out the prices following the title of the book. The first price is the publisher's price. The second price is **The Book Rack** price, which is normally 20% lower. When you pick it at the store there is no shipping cost, though we can also ship it to you. Order now by calling one of the stores or stopping in. We do ask for prepayment on all special orders. **You can also add any of these titles to your request list.** Some will come in soon and

others may take a while, but most will get to you eventually. The genre follows the price.

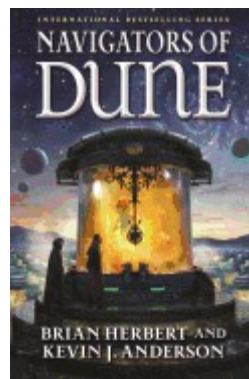
Hardcover and Trade Paperback

Harlan Coben – Home – 28.00/22.40



Clive Cussler – Pirate – 29.00/23.20

Brian Herbert – Navigators of Dune – 27.99/22.40



Carl Hiaasen – Razor Girl – 27.95/22.40

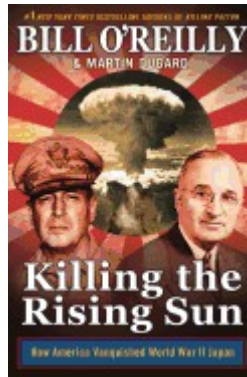
JA Jance – Downfall – 26.99/21.60



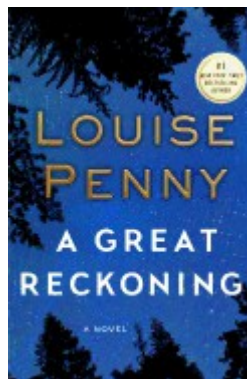
William Kent Krueger – Manitou Canyon – 24.99/20.00

Ian McEwen – Nutshell – 24.95/20.00

Bill O'Reilly – Killing the Rising Sun – 30.00/24.00



Louise Penny – A Great Reckoning – 28.99/23.20

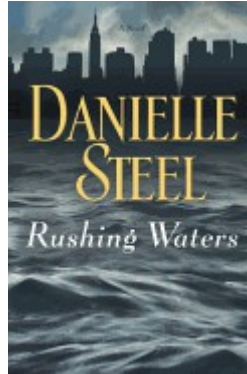


JD Robb – Apprentice in Death – 28.00/22.40

Lisa Scottoline – Damaged – 27.99/22.40

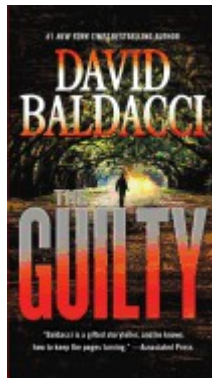


Karin Slaughter – The Kept Woman – 27.99/22.40
Danielle Steel – Rushing Waters – 28.99/23.20

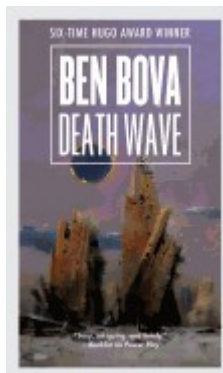


Paperback

David Baldacci – The Guilty – 9.99/8.00



Ben Bova – Death Wave – 8.99/7.20



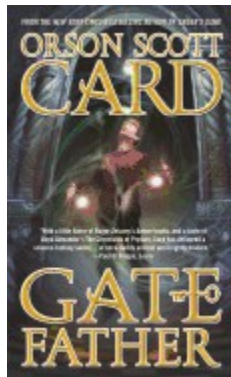
CJ Box – Badlands – 9.99/8.00

Dale Brown – Puppet Master – 9.99/8.00



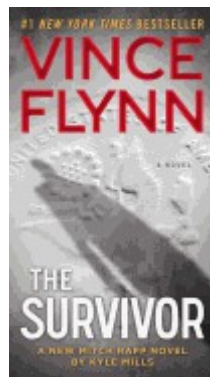
James Lee Burke – House of the Rising Sun – 9.99/8.00

Orson Scott Card – Gatefather – 8.99/7.20



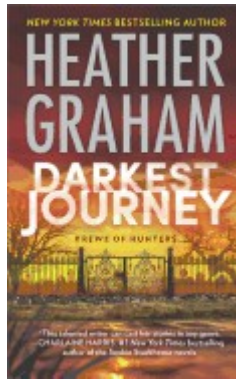
Lora Leigh – Dirty Little Lies – 7.99/6.40

Vince Flynn & Kyle Mills – The Survivor – 9.99/8.00



Ken Follett – Edge of Eternity – 9.99/8.00

Heather Graham – Darkest Journey – 7.99/6.40



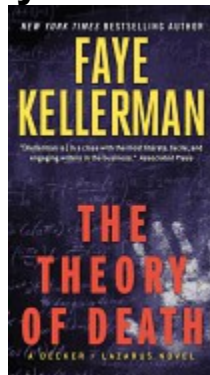
Jane Green – Saving Grace – 8.99/7.20



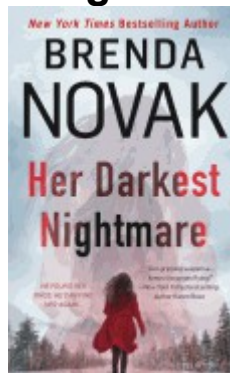
Kay Hooper – Fear the Dark – 9.99/8.00

William Johnstone – Black Friday – 9.99/8.00

Faye Kellerman – The Theory of Death – 9.99/8.00



Brenda Novak – Her Darkest Nightmare – 7.99/6.40



JD Robb – Brotherhood in Death – 7.99/6.40

Stuart Woods – Scandalous Behavior – 9.99/8.00

