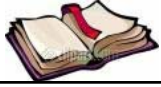


BOOKMARK

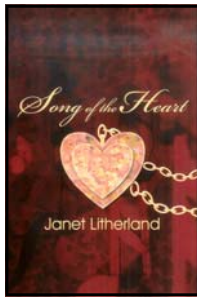


Fiction and Nonfiction News from Janet Litherland

Volume 4 • Issue 1
January 2009

Potpourri

This month marks the release of my new novel, *Song of the Heart*, which I described in the last issue of *Bookmark*. One endorser calls it a “page-turner brimming with romance and suspense.” Another says, “It is a story of resilience. Don’t wait to open it!” I hope you find this book worthy of such praise.



The **Bookshelf** in Thomasville, GA will host a Book-Signing for *Song of the Heart* on Saturday, Feb. 14, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

~~~~~  
December was a month of cautious joy in our house. We celebrated Christmas and five birthdays (yes five!) with extended family but stayed close to home because of my beloved husband’s cancer treatments. As we begin the New Year, we celebrate his continued recovery, thanking family and friends for their love and prayers. Prayer *does* change things!

The “pure genius” (author) referred to and pictured in the last *Bookmark* was Oscar Wilde. I’ll post another contest in the April issue, since this one is filled with reviews!

**All of Janet’s books  
are available at:**

BarnesAndNoble.com  
Amazon.com  
and other online stores.

## Fiction Reviews!

*The Race* (Richard North Patterson, 2007). This well-researched political novel is huge in ways other than its 520 pages. It’s an in-depth (and often scary) look into the mechanics of our political system, including the lengths to which some movers and shakers will go, to get their candidates elected and/or their agendas noticed. Behind-the-scenes dirty trickery is exposed and one can’t help but notice the resemblance to some of our current political campaign tactics. Religion also mixes with politics, as the author includes in his plot a school in Greenville, SC, thinly disguised as “Carl Cash University,” a school I spent an unfortunate year attending in the mid-1950s. The author’s depiction is right on target. The hero of this novel (running for President) is a white senator from Ohio who is dating a black movie star. Yes, this book has it all. I wish I had read it earlier, long before our own presidential nominations campaigns were underway!

*The 19<sup>th</sup> Wife* (David Ebershoff, 2008) alternately offers two stories in one big book. One is the true historical account of Brigham Young’s 19<sup>th</sup> wife, Anne Eliza, and her crusade to end polygamy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The other is a present-day murder mystery involving a young male protagonist who was excommunicated from a renegade polygamist group. In the January 2008 issue of *Bookmark* I reviewed *Shattered Dreams: My Life as a Polygamist’s Wife* by Irene Spencer. To better understand *The 19<sup>th</sup> Wife*, I recommend reading Spencer’s excellent memoir first.

*Death Walked In* (Carolyn Hart, 2008) is a gentle kind of “whodunit”—not a thriller, but rather a detective “cozy” in the style of Agatha Christie. If you’re the type who likes to curl up with a cup of hot tea, a blanket, and a good story, I recommend this book to you. I really enjoyed it (with hot tea and a blanket!).

*Left For Dead* (Kevin O’Brien, 2004) is definitely a thriller, one that kept me turning pages. It’s about a woman who survives a serial killer’s attempt (she’s “left for dead”) and helps track him down. I hadn’t read any of O’Brien’s books before, but I’ll put him on my list to try again.

*T is for Trespass* (Sue Grafton, 2007) is the most recent offering in Grafton’s “alphabet” series, now out in paperback. I’ve collected all of them, beginning with *A is for Alibi*, and continue to enjoy the intriguing, often wacky, pursuits of private investigator Kinsey Millhone. This book is a bit different from its predecessors, in that we get a close-up and personal look at the female villain from her point of view via alternating chapters. Good book! (Already I’m wondering how Grafton will title the “Z” novel.)

Read back issues of *Bookmark* online at:  
[www.janetlitherland.com/newsletter.htm](http://www.janetlitherland.com/newsletter.htm)

## Nonfiction Review

FICTION AND NONFICTION NEWS FROM  
JANET LITHERLAND



I love to hear from my readers!

Send me an e-mail:  
janet@janetlitherland.com

**BOOKMARK ON THE WEB!**  
WWW.JANETLITHERLAND.COM

*The Pastor's Wife* (Diane Fanning, 2008). Not a novel, but rather a "true crime account," this book reports the recent news story of Mary Winkler, the Tennessee pastor's wife who fatally shot her husband and ran away with her three little girls. The author presents interviews with church members, friends and acquaintances who knew the family, as well as detailed trial transcripts that provide insight into the family dynamics. Matthew Winkler, as his father before him, was pastor of a church with stringent beliefs, a church that one of the trial lawyers referred to as a "cult." They believed in absolute domination of males and submission of females. Mary Winkler was convinced that she had to be perfect because she was a preacher's wife; yet, hard as she tried, she could not measure up. Pressure from her husband even included snide comments on her weight and her hair. "Not only did she have to be perfect," the author says, "her children had to be perfect." They had to set an example for other children. Imagine an active toddler being reprimanded by a church elder and told she must be an example. In closing comments the author states, "Ministers' wives are particularly vulnerable to isolation because of their position in life," implying that if there are personal problems, there is no one to help, no one for the wife to confide in ... because everyone expects her to be perfect. I once saw a sentence on a bulletin board outside a church as I drove by. It said, "I'm too blessed to be stressed." It filled me with sadness, as I envisioned the people inside who believed they must never feel stress in their lives, or at least must maintain the appearance of never feeling stress. This book was certainly interesting from beginning to end.

## Readers Speak Out

The following books were reported to me by *Bookmark* readers; I have not read them.

*Riddley Walker* (Russell Hoban, 1980) A novel set 2,000 years in the future, after a nuclear war has devastated the world's civilizations. Embraces religious philosophy; thought-provoking. Narrated by Riddley (who likes to tell riddles) in a weird form of English created by the author especially for this book. Many reviewers say that the strange form of speech, used throughout, is annoying. My reader said that those who "hang in there" will be rewarded.

*Water For Elephants* (Sara Gruen, 2006) A fictional memoir depicting the grit of circus life during the 1930s. Told through the eyes of a Cornell-educated veterinarian, who joined the circus after his parents died in a car accident. One of my readers said she'd heard that this was a good book; and, it was on the *NY Times* Best Sellers List. However, after reading it, she gave it a "thumbs down." Said it was depressing.

And this invites me to comment on Best Sellers lists, of which there are many. Several newspapers maintain their own lists, which reflect their geographic areas; also, groups and clubs publish lists, based on their readers/members preferences. How does a book arrive on a prestigious list? The answer is simple: by achieving huge sales. Sales are reported to the lists by publishers. Unfortunately, some unscrupulous publishers inflate their numbers to sell even more books. "Oh, gee, it's on the best sellers list; it must be good; I'll buy it!" Being on a list is good for a book's sales, though sometimes the listed books are not necessarily good.



**Bookmark**  
Janet's Book News

**Janet's Ratings:** Scaled 1 - 5 ★=OK, ★★★★★=Fantastic!

*Obsession* (Karen Robards, 2007) ★ (Don't bother!)

*Invisible Prey* (John Sandford, 2008) ★★★★★

*Beyond Reach* (Karin Slaughter, 2007) ★ (Structurally confusing; bad ending.)

*Change of Heart* (Jodi Picoult, 2007) ★★★★★ (Strange but interesting.)

Janet Litherland, author of 10 nonfiction books and four novels, also is editor emeritus and former owner of Write-Choice Services, Inc., a book-development company that aspiring authors can find at: [www.write-choiceservices.com](http://www.write-choiceservices.com).