

## Favorite Books III

Compiled from suggestions by Wisconsin legislators & legislative employees,  
May 2004 (Revised)

<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lrb/pubs/tapthepower.htm>

The following titles and book reviews were gathered as an activity for National Library Week 2004. Book reviews were written by legislators and legislative staff and were not altered except for length or to correct typographical errors.

### Nonfiction

**Bayou Farewell: The Rich Life and Tragic Death of Louisiana's Cajun Coast.** Mike Tidwell, New York, Pantheon Books, 2003. Before reading this book, I did not know the Louisiana coast is the fastest disappearing landmass on earth. This catastrophe is being caused by oil companies constructing canals/pipelines and by the government girdling the lower Mississippi River with ... elaborate levees to prevent flooding. Wave-action erosion in over 10,000 miles of canals/pipelines that interlace the coast causes destruction of the fragile marshland; flood waters no longer provide sediments and nutrients to replenish the land. ... This very readable book is an eye-opener and may well be the *Silent Spring* of this decade by forecasting the demise of an irreplaceable area of our country.

**Foul Ball: My Life and Hard Times Trying to Save an Old Ballpark.** Jim Bouton, North Egremont, MA, Bulldog Pub., 2003. *Ball Four* author writes of the community's effort to save and renovate its historic ballpark, Wahconah Park, in Pittsfield, MA.

**Hardball: How Politics is Played, Told by One Who Knows the Game.** Chris Matthews, New York, Summit Books, 1988. This is the end-all and be-all book for anyone involved in the great sport of politics. Even those that may dislike Matthews' TV personality will love this book if they have even the slightest politically competitive nature. Some refer to this book as the Bible for Politicians.

**Jazz Modernism From Ellington and Armstrong to Matisse and Joyce.** Alfred Appel, Jr., New York, Alfred A. Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 2002. Appel argues for classic jazz's central place in the modernist tradition in the arts. Focusing on Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Fats Waller, and Charlie Parker, Appel links how jazz musicians take a song apart and reassemble it to Picasso's collages, Calder's mobiles, Matisse's cutouts ("Jazz"). Its rhythms resemble the prose of Hemingway and Joyce. The music, he contends, is a living argument for diversity. The author's prose dances like Armstrong's best scat singing. Because the book is like a collage, the reader needs a rough working knowl-

edge of jazz and major movements in 20th century art and literature. The 127 illustrations are excellent.

**Limbo: Blue-Collar Roots, White-Collar Dreams.** Alfred Lubrano, Wiley, John, & Sons, 2003. This book is about the "limbo" existence of people raised in blue-collar families, but living white-collar lives. The author is the son of a bricklayer who went to Columbia University, left the old neighborhood and went on to achieve professional success. However, even with a college degree and success, he is unfamiliar with the rules of the upper class and is ill-equipped for the buttoned-down world. More than 100 people were interviewed for the book about class in America.

**The Long Gray Line.** Rick Atkinson, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1989. True story about the lives of six or seven young officers in the West Point Class of 1966: The story of their pre-Vietnam and post-Vietnam lives and service. For anyone who has served in the military, you can't help but draw strong analogies to your own experiences. ... Atkinson also recently released a brand new book on the recent invasion of Iraq: *In the Company of Soldiers*. His first-hand account of the lives of the soldiers in the 101st. ...

**Nickel and Dime: On (Not) Getting By In America.** Barbara Ehrenreich, Henry Holt & Company, 2001. The author went "under cover" for many months in various places across the U.S.A. taking jobs as a cleaning woman at Merry Maids, a waitress at Denny's, and a Wal-Mart sales clerk. She reveals the working conditions in these "unskilled" jobs and the difficulty of making ends meet on poverty level wages. She was inspired to do this by the rhetoric surrounding welfare reform which promised that a job - any job - would be a ticket to a better life. But how does anyone survive, let alone prosper, on \$6-\$7 per hour?!

### Biography

**Abraham Lincoln.** Carl Sandburg, New York, Harcourt-Brace, 2002. I have the two-volume set at home. Beautifully written, lyrical even. Reading these books is absorbing on many levels. Also interesting is that Sandburg lived in Wisconsin.

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## *Favorite Books III* Continued

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***Eddie Would Go: The Story of Eddie Aikau, Hawaiian Hero and Pioneer of Big Wave Surfing.* Stuart Holmes Coleman, New York, Griffin Trade Paperback, 2004.** Eddie Aikau is someone everyone should know. This book is a good start. He was a phenomenal surfer and lifeguard. He risked his life countless times for people who didn't respect the ocean as much as he did. He lost his life trying to save others. Not only is the book an enduring story of an extraordinary hero, but is also an insightful account of the Hawaiian way of life, of the aloha spirit, and pride. ... This is a story about hope and healing. *Eddie Would Go* is an unforgettable story – a story you'll be proud to know.

***Madam Secretary.* Madeleine K. Albright, Miramax Books, 2003.** This is a memoir by America's first female Secretary of State (during the Clinton Administration). The story begins with her childhood as a Czechoslovakian refugee, whose family fled Hitler and then the communists. She arrived in the U.S. at age 11 and grew to be an advocate of civil and women's rights. The book is filled with shrewd character sketches of world leaders and critical negotiations around the world. This is a wonderful book by an admirable woman! An interesting note: Her father, Josef Korbel, was a professor/mentor to our current National Security Advisor, Condoleezza Rice, at the University of Denver.

***The Masked Rider: Cycling in West Africa.* Neil Peart, Nova Scotia, Canada, Pottersfield Press, 1999.** This was a real treat. A lifetime fan of Rush, I was interested in reading what he had to say and to learn more about Africa. The book is more than a diary and a very well written, entertaining account of Peart and a group of others who took a cycling tour of Africa. A good account of the beauty, and the danger, Africa offers – and don't drink the water. [Neil Peart is the drummer and lyricist of the rock band Rush.]

***Master of the Senate.* Robert Caro, New York, Knopf, 1982.** The third volume in Robert Caro's biography of Lyndon Johnson covers his years as Senate Majority Leader. ... Caro has a historian's eye for the significance of his topic and a biographer's love of human detail. Superbly researched and engagingly written, *Master of the Senate* will be appreciated by anyone interested in politics.

***Reflections: Life After the White House.* Barbara Bush, Simon & Schuster, 2003.** The book starts with the inauguration of her son, George W. Bush, and then flashes back to President Clinton's inauguration when she and her husband, George H.W. Bush, were leaving the White House. The book is done in a diary format, and one of the best parts is when she mentions the book or books that she is currently reading. This is an entertaining book and an easy read. She shows the reader her deep love of family. Throughout the book, though, it is obvious that she is very privileged and does quite a bit of "name dropping." Nonetheless, this is a fun book and

you do not need to be a fan of the current President Bush to enjoy it.

***Truman.* David McCullough, New York, Simon & Schuster, 1992.** It is a well-researched and documented book on the entire life of Harry Truman. It is not dry and demonstrates the author's emotions for a President who dedicated his life to serving his fellow countrymen.

### Fiction

***A Bell for Adano.* John Hersey, New York, A.A. Knopf, 1944.** Historical based fiction – one of my favorite books. The story of a young Army officer in charge of a small post-war Italian town. Many similarities to the current efforts of our civil affairs units in Iraq. Pulitzer prize winner for John Hersey who is perhaps better known for his book *Hiroshima*.

***Anna Karenina.* Leo Tolstoy, New York, Modern Library, 1993.** This book is a fictional documentary of the lives of several people in Victorian-era Russia. It spans the realms of everything from marriage and family life to politics, society, and the development and transition of the self. It is a classic.

***Catch-22.* Joseph Heller, New York, A.A. Knopf, 1995.** Without question, the most consistently funny and well-written satire of the military mind and military madness ever! ... The movie adaptation of the novel is quite awful in comparison to the wonders of the book. True "laugh-out-loud" genius at work here!

***The Deep End of the Ocean.* Jacquelyn Mitchard, New York, Viking, 1996.** It is a story of a child who is abducted when he was very young. It fully explores the emotions and issues each member of his family had to deal with during the years he was missing and the impact on the family unit. When the child is found the difficulties the child, his mother, father and siblings had adjusting to his return to the family are described in detail. ...

***Democracy: An American Novel.* Henry Adams, New York, Meridian, 1983.** Henry Adams anonymously wrote *Democracy: An American Novel* in 1880. The story centers around a society widow, Madeleine Lee, who comes to Washington in search of power. Adams details the inner workings and corruption of our government in a way that makes the novel still relevant today.

***The Dogs of Babel.* Carolyn Parkhurst, Boston, Little, Brown, 2003.** This is a very interesting story about the emotional recovery of a man after the death of his wife. He tries to learn why his wife died by talking with the dog, the only witness to the death. The book tells the story of their life together before her death and his coming to terms with his loss.

***The Hobbit, or, There and Back Again.* J.R.R. Tolkien, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1997.** A wonderful escape to an imaginative realm wildly different, yet starkly similar to our own.

## *Favorite Books III* Continued

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***The Master and Margarita.* Mikhail Bulgakov, Dana Point, CA, Ardis, 1995.** The devil arrives in 1930s Moscow one hot day, accompanied, ... by a naked witch and a fat, talking, black cat that has an affinity for vodka, chess, and starting fires. ... *Master and Margarita* offers a profound retelling of the stories of Faust and Pontius Pilate and a depthful portrayal of Stalinist Russia all the while making you laugh yourself sick. I recommend it for any humor appreciating souls that are interested in the philosophies of Christ and Satan's existence or the history of communist Russia.

***Miss Nelson is Missing.* Harry Allard, James Marshall, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1977.** This is a book I read to my second grade students every year when I was teaching. It is a wonderful book for young school children. I was always very dramatic when I read it to them. I would read to them before they went home for the day and just as we got to the most exciting part – we had to get our things ready to go home on the bus. This created some excitement for looking forward to the next day and finding out what ‘really’ happened to Miss Nelson.

***Night Over Water.* Ken Follett, New York, Morrow, 1991.** As an avid fan of spy novels, especially WWII espionage, this has always been one of my favorites. Very much like an Orient Express for the air.

***The Persian Pickle Club.* Sandra Dallas, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1995.** “Set in Depression-era Kansas and made vivid with the narrator’s humorous down-home voice, it’s a story of loyalty and friendship in a women’s quilting circle. ...” – *Publishers Weekly*

***A River Runs Through It.* Norman Maclean, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1989.** A love story for a lost brother. The writing style is the best in modern American literature. A masterpiece.

***The Thrill of the Grass.* W.P. Kinsella, New York, Penguin Books, 1984.** A series of short stories about baseball – or at least about the people that play and enjoy the sport. Lots of variety and humor in Kinsella’s unmistakable prose. He also wrote *Shoeless Joe Jackson* which became the basis for [the movie] *Field of Dreams*. ...

***Tortilla Flat.* John Steinbeck, New York, Penguin Books, 1997.** I found this book while helping my parents move and when I started reading it I couldn’t put it down. This is a witty story of 7-8 friends with hearts of gold, but brains of – well – a substance of less value than gold.

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