

Dear Readers,

The following suggestions reflect my taste and interests. (How could it be otherwise?) The criterion was very good books by fine authors about a variety of subjects that are also entertaining. So, in no particular order, these nonfiction books:

Path Between the Seas, David McCullough. Story of the Panama Canal. Most recently he wrote a biography of Samuel Adams, among about eight books on various subjects including the Johnstown flood, Brooklyn Bridge, and Harry Truman.

Dispatches, Michael Herr. Book on which Coppola based *Apocalypse Now*. This is one of the two best books about the Vietnam War told in hip, New Journalism style (the other being *Chickenhawk* by Robert Mason).

River of Grass, Marjory Stoneman Douglas. Brilliant history of Florida, a classic.

Water and Light, Stephen Harrigan. A beautiful account of scuba diving in Grand Turk. This is the best diving book I've ever read.

Rounding the Horn, me.

Voyage of the Beagle, Charles Darwin.

Our Affair with El Nino, George Philander. A fine example of work by a real scientist writing for the interested public.

Voyages of Discovery, Lynne Withey. Biography of Captain Cook.

Cod, Mark Kurlansky. Story of the fish that changed the world.

Into the Void, John Krakauer. Excellently told story of a recent, terrible attempt to climb Mt. Everest. (Most of these books are categorized as "narrative nonfiction," and this is the book that made the genre safe for the rest of us by selling about a million copies.) You might also like *Into the Wild*, about the guy who died trying to live in the Alaskan wilds; there's a movie version.

Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas, Hunter Thompson. I'm not sure this has held up over time, but I found it hilarious back when. Check out other Hunter Thompson books and essays. He was one of the best.

Consider the Lobster and *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again*. David Foster Wallace. Two collections of fairly short essays by one of the most interesting stylists of recent years, funny, smart, and so damn talented.

Zeitung, Dave Eggers. A brilliant piece of journalism about a New Orleans man (Zeitung) and his family during Katrina and its aftermath.

The Right Stuff, Tom Wolf. About Chuck Yeager and the Mercury astronauts. A fun book; notice his wild style. He was one of the two founders of what came to be called New Journalism. He's written a lot of funny, smart books on many subjects.

Collapse, Jared Diamond. About how societies choose to fail or succeed. Diamond also wrote *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. While we tend to decry the degeneration of quality in today's publishing world, this book sold millions even though it's a serious book about race and geographical determinism. He addresses the question, how did Europe come to dominate the New World and arrives at a brand new conclusion

Founding Brothers, Richard Ellis. Noted historian of the revolutionary period comparing Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Hamilton, and Madison as people and thinkers.

The Snow Leopard, Peter Matthiessen. A search for the snow leopard with famous cat expert George Schaller (sp?). He's written many travel books mostly about nature

In the Heart of the Sea, Nathaniel Philbrick. About the whaleship *Essex* sunk by a sperm whale in mid-Pacific, includes cannibalism.

Check out John McPhee. He's written about 25 books on an amazing range of subjects such as oranges, birch bark canoes, Alaska, professional seaman. Anyone interested in geology will like *Annals of the Former World*, about plate tectonics told as he drives cross country with several geologists, basketball, etc.

The Discovery of Global Warming, Spencer Weart. A synthesis of all the disciplines and interactions between scientists that led to the discovery. I learned a lot from him.

In Cold Blood, Truman Capote. He's the other founder of New Journalism, and this the story of the senseless murder of a Kansas family and of the two guys who murdered them. The best of its kind, troubling and very effective in all ways. He was a nut, a sad guy, but he's maybe the stylist of his generation.

Going Rogue, Sarah Palin. No, no, just kidding.

No matter what you're interested in, you'll find a good book about it; you certainly need not read boring books. And if you want more suggestions, say, about fiction, don't hesitate to e-mail me. Dallas.murphy2@gmail.com

It was a pleasure meeting you all, and I'll see some of you next year.

Dallas