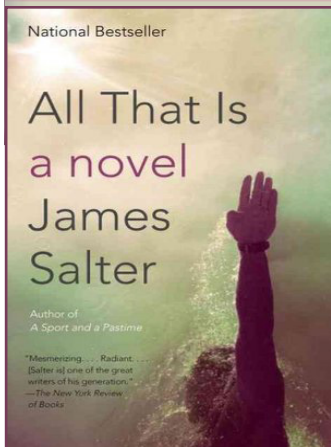




FRENCHMAN'S
CREEK
LIFE

SUMMER
SEPTEMBER 2015
Special Edition

A Publication about the Members and Life
at Frenchman's Creek



This month we are featuring two book reviews by The Bookworm. There is still time to read before the season starts.



All That Is by James Salter

There are some books that you take to immediately, some books that grow on you and some books that simply never go anywhere for you. This was one of them for me. It was well written, and for that reason, I commend it, but for many other reasons, I found it lacking. It was page after page of escapades of sex. The main character never found himself, treated love like an accomplishment, rather than gift. He used women and abused women for his pleasure without regard for anything else. I found him to be extremely unlikeable.

I began listening to the book but after awhile, listening was like a punishment, with my mind constantly reeling with the thought, oh no, not another hot sex scene! I struggled to find the purpose of the book, the message the author was trying to impart. I thought it was going to be about a young officer's return to civilian life and the struggles he would have to face to readjust and rejoin his family and friends. Instead, I found a story about a maladjusted misogynist, who finds success in the working world as a book editor, but absolutely none in the world of romance. For Philip Bowman, love is simply contained in the physical act of sex and he appears to think that women exist merely for that purpose.

When we meet Philip Bowman, in 1944, he is a junior officer on board a submarine, headed for Okinawa. Shortly thereafter, he returns to Summit, New Jersey, to pick up his life. He searches for and finds a job in publishing. We travel with him as he spends the rest of his life working in that business as a book editor for a publishing house that handles literary books like Faulkner's "Forever Amber". He meets a woman named Vivian, from a rather charmed, wealthy background, and begins to experience life to the fullest. This however is short lived, and he goes from one unsuccessful relationship to another, always seeming to seek only sexual gratification from his relationships.

One problem from the start is that the characters are thrown at the reader full speed, often confusing the narrative. Apparently the author is trying to introduce the reader to the atmosphere that existed for Bowman on his return and to do that, he thrusts them into a cauldron filled with people and places that are sometimes hard to separate. The cast of characters seems to be short on moral behavior.

The women are portrayed as loose and careless in their lives, with both their sex and their ambition. This is a time, however, when women had far fewer opportunities than have today. The book is burdened with a cast of less than ethical characters. Infidelity seems to be the order of the day. Unscrupulous behavior seems to be acceptable. They seem to be flying by the seats of their pants, for the most part, doing whatever they want to, without a filter.

Businesses are motivated by profit alone, marriages end with abandon, respect for the rights of others is ignored. Crass remarks are made about people of color, alternate lifestyles and Jews. The book is also marked by the use of unnecessarily crude language and expressions.

Not a fan of gratuitous sex, I found the book peppered with too many sex scenes that seemed completely irrelevant and served only to point out the shallowness of Bowman's treatment of and feelings toward women. Chauvinism doesn't seem like an adequate enough word to describe his behavior.

There were simply too many romantic interludes which only served to show that Bowman seemed only to concern himself with his own needs and cared little, long term, for others. I think he deserved the constant rejection he experienced. I found the story morbid, depressing and lacking in any positive message. It is simply about a man who has no respect for anyone, let alone women, and who is obsessed or consumed by his need for sex, never learning to temper his impulses even into his fifties. He does not seem to grow and become a better person from his experiences. Both Bowman and the company he worked for seemed to have higher standards for the books they published than Bowman had for his own behavior.

Philip Bowman was a man with arrested development who searches for love, but never finds it. It eludes him because he searches for it only in the physical sense and has no understanding of the emotional and perhaps, intellectual needs of his partners.





The Book Nook

Dear
Committee
Members

A Novel

Julie
Schumacher



Dear Committee Members by Julie Schumacher

This delightful little book will have you chuckling under your breath on almost every page and even sometimes, laughing out loud. It is about a sarcastic, curmudgeon who goes about his life finding intriguing ways to complain! In his fifties, one might think he is having a mid-life crisis, but Jason T. Fitger, a professor of Creative Writing and English at Payne University, has been lamenting everything in life for a long time.

We learn through his correspondence (there is no other narrative in the book), that from his office space to his relationships with others, he is disheartened. He spends much of his time writing LOR's (Letters of Reference) for individuals he believes are barely competent or for highly qualified candidates for jobs that are beneath them but are necessary for financial reasons and/or their future prospects. Even when he admires the applicant, his tongue in cheek references to their shortcomings may have the reader rolling their eyes or even rolling on the floor laughing in disbelief. A letter of reference that points out the contenders limitations can't truly be called a letter of reference!

In this book, we are privy to all of the letters, emails and snail mail (his preference), he writes. They represent a year of the professor's correspondence from 2009-2010, and they intensely expose Fitger's life. He is a man who has not achieved the success he envisioned for himself, a man who watches his ex-wife and many of his students and competitors advance beyond him. Almost friendless, divorced from a wife he still loves, working for a department he believes is getting short shrift, as he is, with his office right next door to the toilet, a facility not always as fresh smelling as it should be. It is housed in a building that is a disastrous construction zone, as opposed to the Economics office that was moved to safer and less environmentally hazard location. He expresses his disgust and disappointment with his life and the world, through his rather funny, cynical missives, under the guise of offering his somewhat resentful help to his supplicants.

Even when he attempts to write a positive letter, it comes out, a bit mischievously, in the opposite way, as he uses these communiqués to voice his own opinions, rather than sticking to his mission of writing the letter of recommendation. He makes enemies, not friends, of those he solicits with his left-handed compliments. Occasionally, to further his own image and boost his own ego, he reveals things he shouldn't, private things, to those in a position to make the decision to hire or not to hire the candidate. Also, he makes demands of the person in receipt of his letter, like demanding that if the young person gets the job in the food establishment, which he sorely needs, he is to be forbidden from eating the food they prepare in order to protect his health.

He does occasionally advocate for one or another very admirably, but perhaps, to retaliate against him for his often inadvertent but hurtful comments and behavior, which he would claim were well-intentioned, they decline to help. When misfortune falls upon one of those grad students he had spent time trying to aid and abet, others around him sense a change in him as he sometimes expresses remorse or regret for his past decisions and conduct. They also sense a change in themselves. Some suddenly become supportive, as do staff members and his former wife. From this little novel and Professor Fitger's facetious comments, we are taught about tolerance and compassion in the oddest of ways! We are also forced to confront the difference between the old and the young in the way they tackle issues and confront challenges they must face.

This Professor, who could benefit well from a Dale-Carnegie course, uses cryptic expressions to close his letters, as in one case where he ends with the valediction, "Hazardous Materials Expert". He complains about adjunct professors wanting to air their grudges while tenured professors get far less benefits. He believes his department and the more experienced staff members that remain, are being unfairly treated and considers the idea that they are trying to kill them off with the dust from the construction site, instead of waiting for them to retire.

I think the experience of reading this book in a print edition would be better than the audio I listened to, although it read very well, because the extraneous addresses could simply be skimmed over. It would be great for a beach read or an airplane flight or a boat trip. It is light, whimsical, and yet it is poignant too. I hadn't intended to listen to it straight through, but the humor, sarcasm and pathos were so engaging, I found it hard to stop until 3+ hours later, when it ended!



Up The Creek

KAY and FRED LOKOFF are so proud of their son, Jamie Lokoff, who is one of the producers of the new romantic comedy movie, "SLOW LEARNERS." It previewed at TRIBECA and is part of the Sundance Family It also showed in the Newport Film Festival. Recently, the film played in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and it was filmed in Media, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Philadelphia. The night of the showing happened to be Jamie's 50th birthday. His wife, Jodi, and their three children, Taylor, Jackson and Lily, gave him a great birthday party afterward. The movie has a lot of improv and is written in a Saturday Night Live format. If it does not come to an Art Movie in your neighborhood, you can watch it "ON DEMAND."

gigi column

SYBIL and KENNY JAYSON are filled with great emotional pride and joy as they announce the birth of Great Grandchildren number 7 and number 8. Dean Michael Aigenman was born in June and is the son of their grandchildren, Matthew and Erica Aigenman, who live in Summit, New Jersey. Samuel Eli Reisberg was born in July and is the son of Rachel and Joshua Reisberg who live in West Orange, New Jersey. This makes 7 boys and 1 princess great grandchildren!

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