2009 Comments

Onslow County Extension & Community Association

Book Reviews
February 24, 2009

This thirtieth edition of Comments is provided to you compliments of NC Cooperative Extension and the Onslow County Public Library. The booklet is a sampling of the 115 book reviews submitted by the Onslow County Extension & Community Associates for books read last year.

The staff of the Onslow County Public Library enjoyed reading your reviews. We commend each of you who participated because lifelong readers make lifelong learners. We look forward to reading your reviews next year and hope to see more participation among your members.

Keep reading, keep up the great work, and may next year’s reading continue to enrich, educate, and entertain you!

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This is an interesting story in that it takes place in the late 1600’s and portrays the difficulties encountered when immigrants came to this country.

May and Hannah Powers are two sisters living in England. May is beautiful but rash and carries on with many of the local men, to the point that she is in her early twenties and still unmarried because of her bad reputation. Her father agrees to send her to America to his cousin who wants a bride for his son. May promises to bring Hannah over to join her when she can.

Meanwhile, the father, who is a doctor, has been training Hannah to do all the things he does, including surgery, even though women were not ever considered to be doctors at that time. When he dies, Hannah decides to go to America to be with May. When she arrives there, she finds out that May has been buried and her husband, Gabriel, is living on his father’s land. After a while, she finds herself very attracted to her brother-in-law but hears rumors that he actually killed May. This colors her feelings, even though she is tempted to ignore them as she learns to love him. However, he senses her distrust and finally leaves, leaving her with money and supplies which should take care of her. Hannah ends up actually practicing the medical profession and marries up north. At the end of the story, however, she learns that not only did Gabriel not kill May, but May lived for many years after Hannah arrived in this country.

It’s interesting in showing how one single lie can transform the lives of two people.

Garden Spells by Sarah Addison Allen
Reviewed by Kathy Cook / Jacksonville Club

All of the town says the two sisters are weird, but I don’t, they just happen to be smart and caring, and want to be left alone. They live in the large house their grandmother lived in. This doesn’t help their situation since it has a large back yard in which they grow everything the two Waverly sisters can think of. Of course, the apple tree is the cause of everything … if the people only knew about the tree there would be more trouble than the sisters could deal with.

If you like ghosts or super-natural things happening, you will enjoy this book and at the same time get a good laugh. It is very enjoyable and helps you forget about your worries. This young writer from North Carolina writes a very interesting, unusual book and I am sure we will be hearing a lot about her in the coming years.
The Lucky One by Nicholas Sparks
Reviewed by Donna Williams / Meadow View Club

The Lucky One weaves romance, mystery, and destiny in the plot. The central figure is a former Marine who stumbles on a picture of a pretty girl in the desert sands of Iraq. Unable to find the owner, he keeps the picture with him and he begins to have good luck. He later walks from Colorado to North Carolina seeking the girl in the photograph. He finds her and a beautiful romance develops. However, there are a number of obstacles they must overcome.

Nicholas Sparks alternates the focus of each chapter on the various characters in the novel (their names are titles of chapters). He stays focused on the destiny or fate theme, but he does a wonderful job integrating romance and mystery. I loved this book so much that I didn’t want it to end!

A Redbird Christmas by Fannie Flagg
Reviewed by Kathy Cook / Jacksonville Club

They say if you have enough faith, strong enough faith, things can happen.

Oswald Campbell grew up in an orphanage and now his doctor is telling him if he doesn’t leave town and go South he will die. He gives Oswald a brochure but when he tries calling, the phone company states there is no such place. They end up putting him through to a community center and they help him come to Lost River, Alabama.

Oswald thought it was the most beautiful place he had ever seen. A very small town, one store and post office, but that was o.k. Everyone was so nice to him. When a little girl, Patsy, began showing up at the store everyone fell in love with her. Patsy was very shy. They found out she lived in the woods with a family. The girl could barely walk due to being crippled from birth. When the family decided to leave town they left them the little girl. The townspeople were glad to have her and were eager to offer help. Oswald was especially determined to help her. The townspeople had a doctor check out Patsy. He stated she needed a lot of surgery and would then be fine.

The little girl fell in love with a Redbird that was at the store; the bird seemed to understand her. She wanted to help the bird which was kept in the store because it had been hurt. The night before the surgery the bird died. No one could tell her so they told her the bird got well and flew away instead. The whole town wanted a
Redbird to show up when Patsy came home but no one believed one would come …but Patsy believed. She said one would come and believed it so strongly that the whole town wanted and believed it would happen.

Not only one Redbird, but a sky full of them showed up along with a light snow. This happened the day after Christmas so people came from all over to see it because it never snows in this part of Alabama.

**Shane** by Jack Schaefer  
Reviewed by Ruth Clifton / Sneads Ferry Club

This is a very interesting story about a small town in the West and gives understanding to the designation of “Wild” for that area. The main characters are Marian and Joe Starrett and their son Bob. They befriend a young man, Shane, who stops and asks for a drink from their well. Little did they know that this man would change not only their own lives, but those of the entire town population.

Joe is a homesteader, as are many of his neighbors, but they are constantly being pressured by their neighbor, Fletcher, to sell him their property for ranching. They are all farmers.

Shane works well with Joe and is a tremendous help around the farm. No one can get him to tell where he came from or anything about his background, but the adjective used most by them to describe him is “dangerous”. This is proved accurate when Fletcher finally takes action to get control of all the property by bringing in a ‘hit’ man. The events leading up to the conclusion are very gripping and reveal the true character of Shane. Little Bob reveres him and is greatly influenced by his presence on their farm.

A great read though a ‘tear-jerker’ at the end.

**The Cherokee Trail** by Louis L’Amour  
Reviewed by Nancy Goad / Sneads Ferry Club

This book is about a family who starts west to run a stage coach station. The husband is murdered on the way by an outlaw. Since their initials were the same, the wife decided to continue on and run the stage coach business alone.

I admire the wife in the story because she was so brave. Louis L’Amour always tells a good story and is never boring or dull.
**The Choice** by Nicholas Sparks  
**Reviewed by Nancy Goad/ Sneads Ferry Club**

This story is about a couple with a ‘happy every after’ marriage. Early in their life they agreed that if either was unconscious for more than six months the other would instruct the doctor to ‘pull the plug’.

Driving home after an evening of celebration they were involved in an accident. The wife was left unconscious and the husband was only slightly injured. Six months later there was still no change, leaving the husband to make the choice.

This was a good story that makes you realize we are not in control of our lives and is set in North Carolina.

**Remember Me** by Mary Higgins Clark  
**Reviewed by Donna Williams**

This novel focuses on a couple, Menley and Adam, who have lost their son in an accident in which the mother blames herself. They later have a daughter.

Adam, an attorney, rents his former home on Cape Cod for the summer in an attempt to help Menley deal with her grief and guilt. The house has a mysterious past. One of Adams’ clients is incorporated in the plot. A number of Cape Cod residents are integral players as well.

The author did an excellent job of revealing clues to this mystery throughout the book. It was thrilling in the end to read the connection between Remember House and Menley. Ms. Clark incorporated enough legend to tie things together but not enough to become boring.

**Judge and Jury** by James Patterson  
**Reviewed by Robin Collier-Brown/ Sneads Ferry Club**

This book is about the capture and trial of a Mafia boss, the involvement of a female juror and an assigned FBI agent. The author captures your interest to the point that you do not want to put the book down, and keeps your interest during the entire book.

The touch of romance between the juror and the FBI agent is a nice touch.
Double Take by Catherine Coulter  
Reviewed by Pat Schmauss / Sneads Ferry Club

The police think Julia Ransom killed her husband, renowned psychic August Ransom. After 6 months of investigation she is free of their scrutiny for lack of evidence. She is finally getting back to normalcy when suddenly a man tries to kill her. If it wasn’t for special agent Cheney who was close by, Julia would have drowned. Cheney quickly realizes the attempt on Julia’s life must be connected with the murder of her husband.

Meanwhile in Maestro, Virginia, Sheriff Dixon Noble learns about a woman named Charlotte Pollack who resembles his wife who vanished three years ago. He travels across the country to see her with his own eyes. In San Francisco, Dixon’s and Cheney’s paths cross, brought together by FBI agents Dillon Savick and Lacey Sherlock. All four team up to unlock the mystery behind Charlotte Pollacks’ identity, as well as the forces behind Julia Ransom’s attempted murder and the vicious murder of her husband.

Scent of Danger by Andrea Kane  
Reviewed by Ruth Clifton / Sneads Ferry Club

Carson Brook, at the age of 22, donated his sperm to an anonymous woman from the East in return for $20,000. He used the money to start a perfume company and became a very wealthy man as a result. At the age of 50, he begins to think about the possibility that there might be a child resulting from his ‘donation’. Just at that time he is shot and critically injured, resulting in his kidney starting to fail. He orders his corporate attorney, Dylan Newport, to look into the possibility of his having fathered a child.

Dylan is successful in locating Sabrina Radcliff, now age 28, who is also very successful and runs a management consulting firm. Dylan explains the situation to Sabrina and hopes that she will be willing to donate a kidney if it turns out she is compatible with Carson.

Meanwhile, an investigation is going on into the shooting and several people become the subject of suspicion, including Carson’s Chief Operating Officer, Stan Hager; his girlfriend, Susan Lane, Gloria Radcliff (Sabrina’s mother), and Dylan as well. Afterwards, a young man working in Carson’s company is murdered and the plot thickens.

This book holds one’s attention throughout.
**Back Home Again** by Melody Carlson  
Reviewed by Ruth Clifton / Sneads Ferry Club

Grace Chapel Inn, “a place where one can be refreshed and encouraged, a place of hope and healing, a place where God is at home.” This book tells how three sisters, whose father was a minister at Grace Chapel, began the Inn.

Grace Chapel Inn was the family home for the Howard family in Acorn Hill. When the father died the sisters decide to turn their family home into an inn. The three have not lived together for years and have completely different lifestyles.

Louise, the oldest, is a widow with one daughter and has been living in Philadelphia. She is an accomplished pianist. Alice, the middle sister, has always stayed at home with her father and works at the local hospital and is very involved with her church. Jane is the youngest, is divorced, and has become well known for her cooking … and is also very good at interior decorating.

As they start transforming the house into an inn, they are met with some resistance by some of the locals. They then work with a contractor who, in the end, leaves them ‘holding the bag’ on getting the place completed without funds – which he has taken.

This lovely *Guideposts* book is true to life, relating the petty jealousies in a small town, but it also portrays the loyalty and devotion which are always in the background.

**Life’s Too Short to Fold Your Underwear** by Patricia Lorenz  
Reviewed by Kathy Cook / Jacksonville Club

This book is a collection of stories about people who have an interesting outlook on life and will change your way of thinking. It will motivate you to a happier, less stressful life by helping you ‘back off’ wanting to control everything.

It will help you realize it really doesn’t matter if you fold your underwear or other little things that are not important. It helps you recognize that life is too short to worry about making everything perfect. It will cause you to laugh, cry, and think about what is important.
**Motor Mouth** by Janet Evanovich  
Reviewed by Pat Schmauss / Sneads Ferry Club

Barney had a taste for speed and a talent for breaking the rules. She also knows about cheating since Hooker, a NASCAR driver, had cheated on her with a salesclerk. They are convinced one of the competitors is up to no good on the track. Snooping, they borrow a NASCAR hauler where they find a body and end up destroying two race cars. It turns out that they are facing multiple counts of grand theft auto and homicide.


**Critical Screams** by Robin Cook  
Reviewed by Robin Collier-Brown / Sneads Ferry Club

This book is about a group of hospitals struggling financially with relief just two weeks away … if they can survive the two weeks. A number of surgical patients have died for a common reason which has a coroner looking at their facilities very closely. There is Mafia money involved which spices things up quite a lot.

There is a lot of medical terminology making this book more interesting to someone more familiar with medical terms – I enjoyed this book even though I was lost amid the many medical terms.

**Uncommon Clay** by Margaret Maron  
Reviewed by Pat Schmauss / Sneads Ferry Club

The bright red clay of North Carolina’s Piedmont area attracts most of the south’s skilled potters. Visiting Judge, Deborah Knott, has the task of overseeing the equitable distribution of 25 years worth of marital property of James Lucas Nordan and Sandra Kay Hitchcock. The Nordan’s history together produced great artistic achievements. The credit for the Nordan’s legacy can go to Amos Nordan, the proud clan patriarch. A couple of years ago the more talented son, Danny, apparently committed suicide. Suddenly amid the petty bickering, another gruesome death strikes again. As the sins of the past catch up with the Nordan family, Judge Knott must look into the darkest entanglements of the human heart and put a stop to the well crafted art of murder.
**Miracle** by Danielle Steele  
Reviewed by Donna Williams / Meadow View Club

Two of the three main characters are neighbors but do not meet until a storm damages both of their homes. Maggie and Quinn have experienced great tragedy. She plans to live the remainder of her life alone and he seeks refuge in sailing around the world.

The carpenter called to repair the storm damage forms a relationship with them and the two spend many hours together. Maggie and Quinn both struggle with guilt inwardly, but on the positive side, she works a crisis hotline and Quinn teaches Jack the carpenter how to read. Because of the pain he had caused others, Quinn did not want to have a permanent relationship with Maggie.

This book reminds us that tragedy is a part of life, along with love and happiness. We must not let the former define us. Ms. Steele did a good job of reminding her readers that ‘the sun will come up in the morning’.

**Killer Heat** by Linda Fairstein  
Reviewed by Ruth Clifton / Sneads Ferry ECA

Alex Cooper, a District Attorney in New York City, is coming to the end of a trial in a rape case when she is thrown into investigating a brutal murder of a young woman. As if that weren’t enough, a second murder occurs under circumstances so similar to the first that it appears they may have a serial killer in the area.

Alex had just met a French restaurateur and was hoping to go to France to see him again, but these cases take precedence and consume all her time.

This book would be especially interesting to people who like to read some history since it goes into the background of some of the islands near Manhattan and their importance in past wars.

**Expressions of His Love From the Salevian Collection**  
Reviewed by Kathy Cook / Jacksonville ECA

This is a book of poems by different people. The verses are intended to uplift and you will find one to fit any day of your choosing. The verses in *Little Deeds* and *A Little Prayer* help you to know there is a Lord that is there for each us day or night; we are never alone and it explains it so simple for us.