



# Books

By Monroe S. Miller

Back in early September I started keeping my eyes open for sturdy cardboard boxes that I could use to pack up my books when we finally move sometime next spring. It is going to take a lot of boxes because I've got a lot of books.

Actually, it made me kind of nervous. I have a LOT of books, and I am a little scared that I might have more than I will be able to read. After all, I am 52 and have a lot of years to go before I retire to a life of leisurely reading. And the profession I have chosen to work in consumes enormous time and limits the number of books one can read in a year. Add to that the simple fact a serious bibliophile is always looking to add to his library, and it becomes clear I am going to spend a lot of time in years to come with my nose buried in books.

Some choose books as things they like to collect. The October 1998 issue of *The Golf Journal* has two stories that focus on golf books; one of them is the story of legendary golf book collector Joe Murdoch. Joe enjoyed collecting books, but he also enjoyed the reading.

Me - I'm a reader. Every book I add to my library is purchased with the full intention of reading. But I am falling behind, acquiring books at a rate faster than I am able to read them.

Many of the books I have are like old friends; I can recognize them from a distance long before I can read the title on their spines. I love them all, from a small leather bound copy of Longfellow's *Evangeline* my grandfather had to August Derleth's *The House On The Mound* to Piper and Oakley's *Turf For Golf Courses* and every imaginable subject inbetween.

Readers tend to favor certain subject areas, and I have done that with my library. Emphasis is on the American presidency (excluding Clinton), golf (course management

and player biographies especially), natural studies, American agriculture, American history (with emphasis on the American Revolution) and literary criticism. Yet nearly every other topic you could think of is written about somewhere in my library - if it catches my interest and a book about it is available inexpensively, I will find shelf space for it in my house.

Another fun aspect of being a book guy is getting autographs. This is as opposed to buying autographed copies. I like meeting the author of a book and having the memories associated with a book signing. That is why book signings at the national conference have no stronger advocate than me. But I was collecting autographs years before GCSAA started them as formalized affairs. Old Tom Morris award winners who have written books have signed my copies. Educators have autographed my copies of their textbooks, and golf course architects have been very willing to personalize their tomes for me. Each time it has happened, the particular book has taken on special meaning.

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New books have become godawful expensive and I almost never pay full price for a book. In fact, patience pays off in pleasure when I embark on a search for a specific title at a bargain price and eventually find one. It is as much fun looking for a book at my price as it is to finally sit down and read it.

For the person who loves books, there are two other areas that add immensely to that love - book stores and libraries. Both attract the same kinds of people, mostly pleasant types who are very civil. They are comfortable folks to be around. Madison is a great town for book lovers as it has great book stores and quite a number of them. The city ranks second in per capita spending on books in the country, so it is also a good place to operate a book store. The stores cater to us and offer great opportunities like author readings and discussions and signings, and give a selection second to very few other places.

Actually, some of my favorite book stores are used books stores. There are several here in Madison, but there is the Renaissance Book Store in Milwaukee, King's in Detroit, and the Strand Book Shop in Manhattan. In fact, the daughter of the proprietor of Strands in lower Manhattan (876 Broadway) graduated from the UW - Madison and that offers a starter for a good conversation!

The libraries of America are one of our greatest assets as a nation. They are like golf courses in this sense - no

two are alike. A library is a quiet, peaceful respite in a busy and noisy world. It seems every little town has one, including the tiny library in Surrey, New Hampshire. My parents, Cheryl and I spent a beautiful fall evening in that one, with a fireplace fire crackling, looking up genealogy information on our family. The sunny, white library in Dorset, Vermont is terrific and one of my favorites, the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. is inspiring, and the New York City library is almost a worthy destination itself. The UW - Madison law school library (an addition completed a year ago was designed by partners of a local architectural firm, one of whom is also our green committee chair) and the University of Michigan law school library are unique even though the books they store most certainly are boring. The Carnegie libraries all across the country are wonderful - what a way to remember Andrew - and the ones in Howell, Michigan and Chatfield, Minnesota are particularly impressive. The Camden, Maine village library was designed by Charles Loring and is set in a landscape designed by the renown Fletcher Steele. A statue of Edna St. Vincent Milay graces the lawn, and an outdoor theater faces the village harbor on the Atlantic Ocean. We have a new library in Middleton, but my favorite athenaeum is the Parker library in Fennimore, Wisconsin where my grandmother was librarian for years.

Many books about books have been written in the past few hundred years, but the following short essay says it all



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best. It was penned by Professor Jerry Stern of the English department at Florida State University in Tallahassee. It was originally aired on NPR, and Professor Stern titled it *Booklove*:

"I have just come from an exhibition that told me books will be replaced by electronic libraries, talking videos, interactive computers, cd-roms with thousands of volumes, gigabytes of memory dancing on pixillated screens at which we will blearily stare into eternity.

And so, in the face of the future, I must sing the song of the book, nothing more voluptuous do I know than sitting with bright picture, fat upon my lap, and turning glossy pages of giraffes and Gauguins, penguins and pyramids. I love wide atlases delineating the rise and fall of empires, the trade routes from Kashgar to Samarkand. I love heavy dictionaries, their tiny pictures, complicated columns, minute definitions of incarnative and lanitary, hagboat and fopdoodle.

I love the texture of pages, the high gloss slickness of magazines as slippery as oiled eels, the soft nubble of old books, delicate india paper, so thin my hands tremble trying to turn the fluttering dry leaves, and the yellow cheap, coarse paper of mystery novels so gripping that I don't care that the plane circles Atlanta forever, because it is a full moon and I am stalking in the Arizona desert a malevolent shape-shifter.

I love the feel of ink on the paper, the shiny varnishes, the silky lacquers, the satiny mattes.

I love the press of letter in thick paper, the roughness

sizzles my fingers with centuries of craft embedded in pulped old rags, my hands caress the leather of old bindings crumbling like ancient gentlemen.

The books I hold for their heft, to riff their pages, to smell their smoky dustiness, the rise of time in my nostrils.

I love bookstores, a perfect madness of opportunity, a lavish feast eaten by walking up aisles, and as fast as my hand reaches out, I reveal books' intimate innards, a doleful engraving of Charlotte Corday who murdered Marat, a drawing of the 1914 T-head Stutz Bearcat whose owners shouted at rivals, "there never was a car worse than the Mercer."

I sing these pleasures of white paper and black ink, of the small jab of the hard cover corner at the edge of my diaphragm, of the look of the type, of the flip of a page, the sinful abandon of the turned down corner, the reckless possessiveness of my marginal scrawl, the cover picture - as much a part of the book as the contents itself, like Holden Caulfield his red cap turned backwards, staring away from us, at what we all thought we should become.

And I also love those great fat bibles evangelists wave like otter pelts, the long graying sets of unreadable authors, the tall books of babyhood enthusiastically crayoned, the embossed covers of adolescence, the tiny poetry anthologies you could slip in your pocket, and the yellowing cookbooks of recipes for glance blanche dupont and Argentine mocha toast, their stains and spots souvenirs of long evenings full of love and argument, and the talk, like as not of books, books, books." 🌱

## The Superintendent's Library



# Books For Christmas

By Monroe S. Miller

Face it - you are soon going to have to give up a list of things you'd like to have for Christmas - a new shotgun, a new set of golf clubs or maybe a flashy boat. How about a few books for either your office or home library? Here are two fairly recent releases you for sure will want.

**GOLF COURSE DESIGN** by Geoffrey Cornish and Robert Muir Graves. Published by John Wiley and Sons, Inc. 1998.

It is impossible to condense in a few sentences the impression I was left with after reading this nearly 500 page magnum opus on golf course design, written by two paragons among golf course architects. This book deserves a place on the bookshelf next to Dr. Michael Hurdzan's *Golf Course Architecture*. It is a colossal work and covers all aspects of course design and construction (and reconstruction), from start to finish. It is extremely well illustrated - sketches, architectural drawings and photographs. It is also well tabulated, a great way to help organize a lot of information.

This book needed to be written, for those of us in the field and for students in the classrooms around the country wherever landscape architecture is taught. Cornish and

Graves have proven, from the GCSAA seminar classrooms to those at Harvard University, none were better suited to write it.

It is in bookstores now; I found it in Border's Bookshop in the Architecture section. I give it an unqualified recommendation!

**PRACTICAL GOLF COURSE MAINTENANCE: The Magic of Greenkeeping** by Gordon Witteveen and Michael Bavier. Published by Ann Arbor Press. 1998.

This is a fun book that is chocked full of good, common sense information that only two veteran golf course superintendents like Mike Bavier and Gordon Witteveen could have written. Mike attended the Symposium in Milwaukee and was autographing copies of the book for people.

The book has chapters discussing everyday golf course problems like pins and markers, cart paths and traffic control, and even the clubhouse grounds. You won't find these important (albeit mundane) topics discussed anywhere else.

It occurs to me that like *Golf Course Design* this book needed to be written. They will sell a lot of copies; be sure to get one. And I know they will sign it for you in Orlando! 🌱