

**GOOS BOOK CLUB
850 NORTH BOULEVARD
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA 70802**

IN MEMORIAM

Page Acree: 1919--2005

Frank Craig, Jr.: 1918--2005

Durwood "Woody" Facundus: 1934--2003

Charles Prosser: 1919--2005

February 7, 2006

RE: FIRST GOOS BOOK CLUB MEETING OF 2006 (1/19/06)

Lads:

The regiment gathered in our usual private room at Kiva's Restaurant on Thursday, January 19, 2006 for the very first meeting of the Goos Book Club in this new year.

Present for duty were:

James R. Clary, Jr.	Wally Dunlap
Gus Dalton	Frank McArthur
Clay Waggenpack	Bubba Currier
Herman Moyse	Brian Luikart
Keith Richardson	Bob Thurston
Larry Michoud	John Clifford
Herb Dyer	Alan Carey
Jesse Gellrich	

The Group also welcomed Charles Kahao, a guest who accompanied Clay Waggenpack. We hope Charles will return, unless he is understandably worried about the effect his affiliation with this tribe might have on his political fortunes.

As is the Group's custom, we first surveyed the membership to see if any new books had been encountered which merited a nod. The following works were mentioned:

- 1) Bubba Currier: *No Ordinary Times*, by Doris Goodwin. This is a book about the relationship between FDR, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Winston Churchill.
- 2) John Clifford: *Wings Of Morning*, by Thomas Childers, a history professor from the University of Pennsylvania. The story of the World War II air war and the last bomber shot down over Germany.

Disturber of the Peace by William Manchester. This is Manchester's first biography and his subject was H.L. Mencken. Dr. Clifford said it was an excellent read.

- 3) Frank McArthur: *Bayou Farewell, The Rich Life And Tragic Death Of Louisiana's Cajun Culture*, by Mike Tidwell. This was written prior to our recent hurricanes, but — since Katrina and Rita — the observations made by Tidwell are particularly poignant. Frank said it was an excellent and timely read.
- 4) Clay Waggenpack mentioned two books which had great critical promise, but which did not live up to that promise, in his opinion. After telling us the titles, he explicitly instructed me to remove the names from this list. . .which. . .I guess has now been done. We are a very odd Group.
- 5) Bob Thurston: *Night Draws Near* by Anthony Schadid (2005). The author is an Arab American journalist from Iraq. The book is about what is going on in Iraq from the Iraqi point of view and Bob said it was a *very* interesting read.

- 6) Wally Dunlap: *Men To Match My Mountains* by Irving Stone. This book, written in the 1960s, is a historical review of that period in American history stretching from the California Gold Rush through the end of the 19th Century. Wally said it was fantastic.

Price Of Islam by Bernard Lewis. This book reveals the global, strategic aims of the Islam faith and “will scare you to death.”

- 7) Keith Richardson: *I Am Charlotte Simmons* by Tom Wolfe. Keith said that Wolfe’s new book will also “scare you to death,” particularly if you have any children in college. Apparently, it takes place on a fictional college campus (modeled on Duke University) and gives some insight as to what’s happening at America’s colleges in this day and age.
- 8) Herb Dyer: *Teacher Man* by Frank McCort. Herb said he has liked all of McCort’s books and enjoyed his latest, although it does not quite measure up to some of his earlier work.

After discussing some of these recommended books, we then turned to the matter at hand, which was “*The March*” by E.L. Doctorow, selected by your Obedient Servant, who — after shooting off his mouth about how much he enjoyed this novel — was promptly Dragooned at the last meeting.

E.L. Doctorow began his career as a “reader” for Columbia Pictures. He later served as the chief editor for Dial Press through the late 1960s. Thereafter, he became what one finds written after his name in every literary sketch about the guy: “*One of America’s pre-eminent authors.*” He has written numerous prior novels and has received a great deal of critical acclaim, particularly for *Ragtime* and *Billy Bathgate*.”

All of the professional reviews for this work were laudatory, without exception. Most made the analogy — just as was set forth in the story — that Sherman’s March, providing the backdrop of this story, was a huge worm or slug-like creature moving across the Georgia countryside on a 60-mile front, devouring everything in its path and leaving destruction in its wake.

The majority of the regiment seemed to enjoy the read, however there were some criticisms.

Bubba Currier was “tired of war” because of our current experience in Iraq and had a difficult time wading through this bellicose book, detailing — as it did — a very violent time in this country’s history.

Jesse Gellrich took some exception to Doctorow’s utilization of “impersonation,” where he allows the narrative to slide into the minds of the various characters, whereupon the narrator “speaks” as that character. Jesse did not find this narrative convincing in many places. Instead of believing he was “hearing” the thoughts of a 15-year-old slave girl, he began to suspect he was hearing the thoughts of a 74-year-old writer in New Rochelle, New York *attempting to speak* like a 15-year-old slave girl. This problem bothered him.

This historical work is written upon a model which Doctorow has attempted before, most notably in *Ragtime*. Herb Dyer and others agreed that this work, while interesting, did not measure up to Doctorow’s effort in *Ragtime*, back in 1975.

Keith Richardson made the point that, if we want to learn about what happened during Sherman’s March to the Sea, why read a historical narrative like “*The March?*” Why not read the real, accurate, nitty-gritty histories which are available on the subject.

In the rejoinder of the night, Keith’s observation led Clay Waggenpack to exclaim: “*You have to have fiction in order to tell the truth!*”

After the general laughter subsided, Clay emphasized that he had meant exactly what he said. He used the example that, one might read all of the books available on the Congo but — until you have read Joseph Conrad’s “*Heart Of Darkness*” — you do not know the Congo.

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Similarly, another Goos wag noted in an e-mail to your writer after the meeting that one could learn more about the Catholic faith in one Flannery O'Conner short story than in an entire year of *Catholic Digest!*

On balance, however, the group seemed to like the book, although the reaction more closely paralleled Warren G. Harding's nomination as the Republican candidate for president in 1924. Emerging from a smoke-filled room, a power-broker, fingers locked into his vest pockets, named Harding as the nominee and said: "*He's no world beater, boys, but he's the best of the lot.*"

Our meeting also meandered into several interesting areas centering upon the American Civil War, Grant, Sherman, the tragic nature of that conflict, and the fact that the war was not some "mindless" paroxysm of violence. It was based upon deep and abiding idealism on the part of both sides.

After the conversation diminished to a dull roar, Clary Dragooned Herman Moyses as the Goo to select our next book. He promptly selected "*Love In The Time of Cholera*" by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, a reprise author for this group.

The next Goos' meeting will take place at Kiva's on Thursday, March 2, 2006 at 6:30 p.m. In accordance with what has become known as the Scott Thurston corollary, we are attempting to schedule meetings more frequently and, thus, the March 2 date was unanimously approved.

At that meeting, nominations will be held for the President of this group, who will serve from April 2006 through April 2007. There are so many worthy candidates that the mind boggles. Nominations should flow from the membership like a mighty river. Volunteerism in this day and age is rampant, I understand. Accordingly, volunteers should be literally leaping out of the wood piles to assume the duty.

On March 2, 2006, we shall receive all of these nominations and volunteer offers of leadership. Then, we shall vote.

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By way of advance notice, this letter will inform the Goos that the meeting *following* our gathering on March 2, 2006 will take place at Frank McArthur's house.

As all of you will remember, we occasionally step away from the restaurant scene for a "change of pace" and hold our meetings at one of the members' residences. Frank McArthur has volunteered to offer his home for this purpose and we will all agree on the date when we gather again at Kiva's on March 2, 2006 at 6:30 p.m. (ie. volunteerism **is rampant!**)

As I wind down my many years of arduous service in the constricting harness of my office, I nonetheless remain — as ever

Your Obedient Servant,

James R. Clary, Jr.

JRCjr/slc