

Reading Habits

8-26-24

I suppose, at first glance, that you would think I'm a fairly eclectic reader, but actually I have very specific things that I gravitate to when I select reading material.

In terms of books, I try get a balance between fiction and nonfiction. I probably read one non-fiction interspersed with three fiction. The nonfiction books are generally science oriented. I recently read one written by a volcanologist and my current nonfiction is a book about Neanderthals. I balance this "heavy" reading mainly with fiction, mysteries definitely being my go-to genera. You can go down a rabbit hole there. Once you find an author you like, you can get sucked into a long series of their writing. Among my recent favorites are Anne Perry and Louise Penny. If you find an old writer, there is no problem. You can just keep going on their life-long list of titles. If, however, you get hooked on the writing of a contemporary author, you often find yourself sitting and waiting anxiously until they manage to write the next book in the series.

Long ago I started recording in a notebook every book that I finished. I write down all of the titles, authors, basic plot, and some brief assessment. I do this because I have a terrible memory. Who was that author I was reading last year? What was the title of that particular book I want to recommend? I would never be able to come up with the answer if I didn't have it written down to refer to. I started doing then when I read (now what was his name.....?) ah yes - Dick Frances. All of his books had interchangeable titles and I had to check to see which ones I had actually read and what came next. That was probably 50 years ago and I have maintained the practice ever since.

My neighbor Susan, who I compare notes with when we go to the book store to knit, is currently doing a deep dive into Science Fiction. Every once in a while she will tell be about one of the books that she is reading that sounds interesting to me. Often they are, indeed, interesting, but they don't call me back like the mysteries do.

I rarely read biographies or history, but I recently read a book written by a friend, John Gernardt, that I really enjoyed. Biographies are definitely more interesting when you actually know the author. Not only that, his book contained information on both medical events and linguistic experiences, both of which I find interesting.

Speaking of science, I read periodicals that are mainly centered on science. The main one is a British weekly publication, New Scientist. I also at least skim several magazines published by organizations such as the Nature Conservancy.

The problem with all this reading material is that I really don't have the time to devote to it. This means that I end up with desperately tall towers of books, often started and just waiting to be finished, or piles of magazines that can't be tossed because they have just one or two more articles that I hate to leave unread. I clearly need to carve out more time in my day, but I'm not sure when THAT will happen. Maybe when I'm old....