

BOOKMARK



Fiction and Nonfiction News from Janet Litherland

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Potpourri

My husband, Doug, and I just returned from a trip to London and Ireland. I would like to say it was business, a “research” trip, but it wasn’t. It was pure fun! Yes, I’ll use bits and pieces of it in future writing, but that was not the point of going. We started in London, seeing the new musical, *Buddy* (the Buddy Holly story with those wonderful 1950s tunes), and *The Boy Friend*, an old British musical that was revived this year. That one is special to me, because I was a member of the cast in 1960 (yes, that long ago!), touring Air Force bases around the Arctic Circle for the USO. Great memories! In Ireland, Doug and I visited the Rock of Cashel, the Dunbrody Famine Ship, the JFK Homestead, the Ring of Kerry; and, along the way some pretty little towns with their charming pubs and great Irish musicians. Such a friendly country! Here’s a picture taken at Sneem, on the Ring of Kerry, Ireland:



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are available at:**

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An Attitude Adjustment

“Block” — Is It Just for Writers?

Every writer, no matter how successful, will at some time experience “**writer’s block**,” possibly from a lack of ideas, self-dissatisfaction, or the inability to get organized. It also could define other areas of life, or projects (any kind) that we never seem to finish. If we recognize that the “block” comes from within and is not determined by circumstances or other people, we have a chance to overcome it. I call writer’s block “**writer’s attitude**.” I tell myself: “I do not need solitude to write. Everything else does not have to be done before I begin writing. I will concentrate on one thing at a time.” My current writing project occasionally stalls. It’s not “blocked,” because it does chug along; but, as The Carpenters’ old song goes, “... so many roads to choose.” The most recent choice was whether to send my villain (a “very bad dude”) to prison forever, or to kill him. Sometimes it helps to get away for a few days, to see things with a fresh eye. That’s what I did. Then I scooped up some “attitude,” and the decision was made. Tentatively titled *The Locket*, this story involves the search for a lost love and, of course, problems created by the bad guy.

Memoirs (again)

Recently, I re-read the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Angela’s Ashes* (Frank McCourt, 1996). This sad, yet often humorous memoir, told through the eyes of McCourt as a boy, is built on long rambling sentences with very little punctuation, but that’s part of its charm. Despite all the bad things that happened growing up poor in 1930s Ireland, he says, “It’s lovely to know the world can’t interfere with the inside of your head.” Because it’s a huge book at 460 pages, some of you may prefer to rent the movie, which is good but lacks the book’s humor. McCourt wrote two sequels. The first is titled, *’Tis* (It Is); the second is *Teacher Man*; but I probably won’t read either of them, because some stories are better left alone. *Angela’s Ashes* is a beautiful book – yes, *’Tis!* The End.

Debbie Griffiths’ self-published memoir, *Little Lady, Big Dream*, was written to encourage others. She says, “You are not given a dream without being given the power to make it come true.” She made her dream come true and tells her story. What is your dream? Have you started *your* memoir? For help, visit back issues of *Bookmark* at www.janetlitherland.com/newsletter.htm

My memoir, *Memories are Made of This* (for my family only) has 20 short chapters. Here’s a story from the chapter about my (bad!) cooking: When Mark (my son) was in college, his friend told me that he and Mark were discussing where to go for dinner one evening. He (the friend) offered, “There’s a place not far from here that advertises *Home Cooking, Just Like Mom’s*.” My son answered, “Oh, no. That’s too scary.” See how it’s done? Be chatty. Tell your stories just as they happened. But DO tell them!

Book List

FICTION AND NONFICTION NEWS FROM
JANET LITHERLAND



I love to hear from my readers!

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Since the last issue of *Bookmark* (July), I have read—or tried to read—many books; some old, some new. In addition to those mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter, a few are:

The Overlook (Michael Connelly, 2007)—Excellent thriller.
The Woods (Harlen Coben, 2007)—Excellent thriller.
The Perfect Fake (Barbara Parker, 2007)—Boring; didn't finish it.
The Sands of Time (Sidney Sheldon, 1988)—My title: *A Waste of Time*.
My Boyfriend's Back (Donna Hanover, 2005)—Nonfiction by Rudy Giuliani's ex-wife; 50 fascinating reports of reconnecting with lost loves, including Hanover's own. Includes photos.

Waiting to be read:

Her Royal Spyness (Rhys Bowen, 2007)—Fiction; British humor
Provenance (Frank McDonald, 1979)—Corruption in the art world
Bloodstream (Tess Gerritsen, 1998)—Medical thriller
Joined at the Heart (Al & Tipper Gore, 2002)—Family/Political memoir
The Circle (Peter Lovesey, 2006)—British crime fiction
Almost There (Nuala O'Faolain, 2003)—Irish memoir

O'Faolain, a columnist for *The Irish Times* (newspaper), previously wrote *Are You Somebody?*, also a memoir. People who thought they recognized her (from her news photo) but couldn't "place the face" would ask, "Are you somebody?"

Janet Litherland, author of 10 nonfiction books and three novels, also is Editor Emeritus and former owner of Write-Choice Services, Inc., a book-development company that aspiring authors can find at:
www.write-choiceservices.com.

More Room For News

Many of you receive *Bookmark* via e-mail. Many others receive it via USPS. For the latter, beginning with the last issue (July), *Bookmark* is being mailed in an envelope rather than as a fold-up flier. (Yes, that's correct: flier, not flyer!) Several readers, particularly those in the western states, reported that their fliers were being mangled by the USPS, often with mere pieces delivered in a plastic "apology" sleeve. The definitive word here is "often." If it happens *often*, then I need to make a change (especially since those readers actually want to receive the newsletter!). So, with the elimination of the address/stamp section, there is more room for book news. With that in mind, here is a question for everyone:

Are there particular reading/writing subjects, books or authors that you would like to see discussed in *Bookmark*?

Language Barriers

I had a problem recently with language in a novel I was reading—not foreign language, just plain old dirty language. Generally, I don't mind it, *if* it is important to establish a type of character. In fact, I've been known to throw some colorful words into my own books, but always for a good reason. I don't like *gratuitous* smut, and that's what I found in *Dust To Dust* (Tami Hoag, 2000). I've said in previous newsletters that I will give a book 20 pages to engage me.



Bookmark
Janet's Book News

That book only made it to page eight before I tossed it. Fortunately, I hadn't paid for it. It had been passed on to me by someone else who probably didn't like it. In those few pages, I felt that Ms. Hoag was trying to "write like a man." That, in itself, is an erroneous cliché, because scores of men are writing terrific books without (or with limited) offensive language. To be fair, I gave Hoag another chance with *Alibi Man* (2007), and found it a fairly good "thriller," though the female protagonist is a bit too prickly for my taste—always sniping at people, particularly the man she's obviously in love with, shades of the old "romance" novels. That could be because Hoag was a romance writer ("Loveswept" series) before she began writing suspense. *Alibi Man* is rough, but not as rough as *Dust To Dust*.