

September 08 - SUMMARY – COASTING by Raban

We were a group of eight plus our East Coast sailor, Curt, as Sam lead us around the coast of England with Jonathan Raban's Coasting. We had a new sailor in our midst. Welcome Mary and we hope you chose to join us in the future.

Mr. Raban's style of writing and story telling intrigues us, but we are a little confused about the man himself. As many of the group had not finished the book before the meeting, we thought that was why we were bewildered. Those that had finished the book informed us that even at by the end, the questions about Jonathan Raban remain unanswered.

Sam started us off with his take on the book. He loves to read about sailing and thought that is what he had picked up, a travel book that involved sailing. What he came away with was one man's journey to make peace with his life, his country, and his family with sailing as the backdrop for the story. The author spent time in flashbacks to his early childhood and school days and his never quite satisfactory relationship with his parents in general and particularly his father. (There is apparently another book, Passage to Juneau, where Raban is still working on these issues even up to the death of his father, again with no clear resolution.) The abruptness of the ending of the book left those that had finished it scratching their heads.

What Sam appreciated about this book was how its tone was very different from other travel writers. It did not feel like a travel promotion or marketing piece. He obvious writes well and has a wonderful command of the language.

In his 40's when he took the trip, Mr. Raban said he picked the title for the book and the style of trip because he was accused of coasting through life. He figured he would follow through on that theme and coast around the coast of England. The attitude of the writer hit many of us in that he appeared to be a man who "doth protest too much." He did not speak about belonging to his country of birth but referred to England as his Fathers' country. Always on the fringe as an outsider looking in, he was

most likely the child who had been pushed into lockers at school. One speculates if this led to his inability to connect with people on a continuing basis, and a possible source of his disconnect with Paul Theroux.

Mr. Raban felt he is an unlikely Englishman, writer, sailor, parson's son, and traveler. We understand that he has also had three divorces, so he must not see himself as a traditional husband either. That is my supposition, not his. That being said, he obviously does have knowledge and skill as a sailor, writer and traveler as evidenced by this trip and his other books about travel and water journeys. While there were some ups and downs in his life, he seems to have created the perfect life for someone who is more comfortable living on the fringe of society.

As I went into the meeting, I had only achieved the first three chapters. Even with that little of the book read, I was charmed by his description of the inside of his cabin and the quantity of books he took along on the journey. I could really see the beautiful paneling and shining brass, smell the wood and lines and imagined the looks on the dock workers faces as they watched crate after crate of books go below. Many of our group plan to follow his lead and read or reread some of the books and authors he mentioned such as Rob Roy and the works of T.E. Brown.

As with so many of our previous book selections for the TLBC, when someone in the group had been to the places mentioned, they add personal experiences and memories to corroborate the book. For those that had been to England, Mr. Rabans discussion on the economic and political system of England, and the Falklands issue in the 1980's was very insightful. The one thing that really stood out to me was the strength of the local identity felt by many inhabitants. In the 1980's the fishing industry had been incredibly reduced and the economies of many smaller cities, towns and villages in bad shape. Paula had worked in Lowestoff in the 1960's and could revisit her experiences through the book. Paula and Sam's son

went to the University in Glasgow in the 1990's and experienced the extremes in "un" and under-employment, local identity and class system that still exist.

His long chapter entitled the Merrying of England went into detail about the commercialism and incredible growth of tourism in England. His description of the sour attitudes exhibited in many of the towns was a bit of shock to me, as I had not experienced those attitudes. The rise of tourism does not appear to be unique to England and as many of our members have found, it is getting harder and harder to get close to an authentic cultural experience in many places.

Cecelia, one of our newer members, wanted to know what a C.N.D. Badge was. During the meeting, no one knew the answer. I Googled after the meeting and found that they were badges for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament or the peace sign which was very familiar to the U.S. during the 1960's. She also commented that she appreciates the diversity of books selected. That is why I think all of us come to the group, to broaden our reading about travel.

Thank you Sam. Again, most of us would never have found this book without your suggestion. Keep you eyes open for another interesting read.

## **UPCOMING MEETINGS AND READING LIST**

**Oct 13** 2 short books led by Jane **Volunteering Around the Globe** by Suzanne Stone (newly published and may not be in the library)

**A Life Inspired (Peace Corps)** I have free copies of the Peace Corps book for the group. I will have them at the next Budget Treasures Travel Club on Thursday, Sept 25 from 6-7:30 at the Ross U Hills Library.

[www.budgettreasurestravelclub.com](http://www.budgettreasurestravelclub.com) for more information. Or you can contact me via email to arrange a time for a pick up.

**Nov 10 Reading Lolita in Tehran by Azar Nafis led by Stacie. [THE TATTERED COVER HAS THESE BOOKS ON HOLD AT THE RESERVE DESK AS OF SEPT 11.](#)**

**Dec 8 Children of the Jungle by Sabine Krueger led by Keith**

**Jan 12 My Travels with Charley by John Steinbeck lead by Paula**

**Feb 9 An Embarrassment of Mangoes by Ann Vanderhoof led by Barb**

**Mar 9 My Path Leads to Tibet by Sabriye Tenberken led by Phylliss**

**Apr 13 Sharon Cain will lead a book.**

**AT THE NOVEMBER MEETING, WE WILL BEGIN TO LOOK AT BOOK SELECTIONS FOR APRIL THROUGH SEPT 2009. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO LEAD A BOOK, PLEASE BRING TWO TITLES AND AUTHOR AND HAVE A SHORT SYNOPSIS READY FOR THE GROUP. WE ASK THAT THE BOOK YOU SUGGEST BE AVAILABLE IN PAPERBACK AND THAT IT CAN BE FOUND IN THE DENVER, RANGEVIEW, JEFFERSON, ARAPAHOE, AND/OR BOULDER COUNTY LIBRARIES. WE WILL VOTE ON THE BOOKS AT THE DECEMBER MEETING.**

**Thanks to every one who came to the meeting last week, or to a previous meeting and contributed your time, thoughts and interest. This club is made of its members. Without you, we would not exist. Thanks for your continued support. I look forward to reading with you in the future.**

**Jane Stanfield  
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