

Don't Mourn Summer's End; Catch Up On Your Reading

BY LYNN CARLSON

If you don't know about Robert and Francesca, chances are it's because you're still on a waiting list to read **The Bridges of Madison County**, the slim, wildly popular little volume by Robert James Waller, the essayist-turned-novelist. *Literary Journal* calls "the sultan of saccharin."

While Waller's new book, **Slow Waltz in Cedar Bend**, is scheduled to hit the shelves in November, **Bridges** continues to enjoy phenomenal success. In print for more than a year, the bittersweet love story continues to attract new fans who've discovered it through sources as diverse as the "Oprah Winfrey Show," National Public Radio and the "Doodlesbury" comic strip.

"Ever since Waller was on 'Oprah'—from that day on, we couldn't keep it," says West Brunswick Branch Librarian Felicia Hardy, adding that 50 people are waiting to check out the branch's four copies.

Sales are as brisk as ever, too, says Jim Lowell of L'Bookworm at Holden Beach. "Our top three sellers are **Bridges of Madison County**, **Bridges of Madison County** and **Bridges of Madison County**," Lowell jokes, adding that rentals of the book are "going wild" as well.

While cartoonist Gary Trudeau may find **Bridges** a little heavy on schmaltz, readers can't get enough—even "Radio Readers" who heard Dick Estell read it on his NPR show earlier this summer.

Next on the hot list? Everything

by Mississippi lawyer-novelist John Grisham. With Tom Cruise starring as Mitch McDeere in **The Firm** and Julia Roberts soon to hit the screen as Darby in **The Pelican Brief**, demand for **The Client**—also destined for celluloid—has escalated, Hardy said.

Die-hard Grisham fans still love **A Time to Kill** the best of all, and someday soon there will be millions of dog-eared paperbacks of it in yard sales and on used bookstore shelves everywhere.

Right behind Grisham is Chicago lawyer Scott Turow, who continues to keep eager readers' Itty Bitty Book Lights glowing late into the night with **Pleading Guilty**. While not enjoying the critical acclaim of **Presumed Innocent** and **Burden of Proof**, **Pleading Guilty** is selling well in hardback and is in demand at the library, too.

Margaret Shick, manager of Little Professor Book Center in Southport, says that while Waller and Grisham are the sales leaders there, the new Tom Clancy novel, **Without Remorse**, has been "going gangbusters ever since it came in."

In addition, Shick says more and more mystery and crime fiction lovers are becoming fans of Patricia Cornwell, whose Richmond-based stories unfold through the point of view of medical examiner Dr. Kay Scarpetta.

Cornwell's **All That Remains** is about the search for a serial killer whose victims may include the daughter of the country's first female drug czar. "There's a lot of detail about how evidence is collected and the profile of a killer is arrived at," Shick said. "They're really good books."

No matter what people are reading, "more and more of them are enjoying their vacation through a good book," says Lowell, who adds that business has been strong in sales and rentals, in paperbacks and hardbacks.

In demand are new books by the perennially popular authors—Danielle Steele, Jeffrey Archer, John Jakes, Larry McMurtry, Belva Plain and John LeCarré. Gaining ground are young authors such as Barbara Kingsolver, whose new **Pigs In**

Heaven is sparking renewed interest in her two other novels, **The Bean Trees** and **Animal Dreams**. Kingsolver's fine writing is characterized by strong female lead characters with modern problems and old-fashioned good hearts.

Among local and regional titles, tops is Richard and Barbara Kelly's **The Carolina Watermen: Bug Hunters and Boatbuilders**, which records the reminiscences of Brunswick County boat builders, shrimp boat captains and fish house owners. In the July-August *Island Living*, reviewer Eric Carlson said "this fascinating glimpse below the decks and behind the docks of our local seafood industry will be a treasured addition to the library of anyone who lives or vacations on the South Brunswick Islands."

Lowell said L'Bookworm had sold 60 copies and was expecting a surge of new sales with the Kellys' scheduled book-signing session there on Aug. 21.

Also locally noteworthy is Patricia Gurgel's **Into The Hurricane**, written at Holden Beach, scheduled for release Sept. 22 and reviewed by Susan Usher elsewhere in this issue of *Island Living*.

Books on Tape

While books on tape don't seem to have become big sellers in this market, they are extremely popular with library patrons.

"We have lots of new titles, and books on cassette are booming," Hardy says. In addition to offering many popular modern titles on tape, the West Brunswick Branch has a respectable collection of classics, including Henry James' **Daisy Miller**, Charlotte Bronte's **Jane Eyre** and Kate Chopin's **The Awakening**. For a real treat, listen to Sir John Gielgud reading Evelyn Waugh's **Brideshead Revisited** next time you take a road trip.

Children's Books

For the kiddies, this is the year of "anything about dinosaurs or turtles," says librarian Hardy.

"All the teachers are coming in looking for books to introduce kindergartners to school," she

added. Hardy especially likes Kevin Henkes' charming book **Chrysanthemum**, about a little rat starting school and learning to deal with classmates who make fun of her name.

Parents continue to favor current and past Caldicott and Newberry Medal winners for their little ones, while older children continue to devour Nancy Drew and Hardy Boys mysteries.

At Little Professor, big favorites among adolescents are R.L. Stine's books which "go out like wildfire," according to Shick.

Shick likes to recommend Cynthia Rylant's books for kids about 4-8. "**The Relatives Came** is wonderful," she adds.

Seashore-based children's books such as Nags Head author Suzanne Tate's **Salty Seagull** and **Tammy Turtle** continue to move well at the library and local bookstores.

What's Ahead

Hardy provided a copy of the "Prepub Alert" from the July issue of *Literary Journal* to give *Island Living* readers something to look forward to. Among books scheduled for release in November are:

■ Margaret Atwood's **The Robber Bride**. "Set in Toronto, Atwood's story explores the concept of woman as villain."

■ Carrie Fisher's **Delusions of Grandma**. "In Fisher's next fling, a very pregnant Vivian decides to kidnap Grandpa Bill from the nursing home."

■ Garrison Keillor's **The Book of Guys**. "These 20 stories—only five of which have been previously published—concern guys like Al Denny, author of **Rebirthing the Me You Used to Be**."

■ James Michener's **Creatures of the Kingdom: Stories of Animals and Nature**. "This book collects nature stories found in classic Michener novels, from Alaska to Hawaii—and throws in one unpublished piece for good measure."

So if you're mourning the end of summer, get a grip! Lose your sorrows between the pages of a good book.

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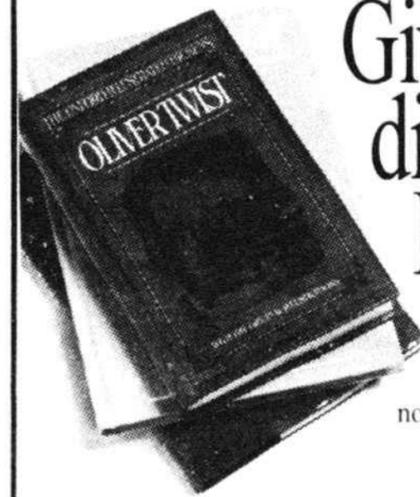
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