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What was your reading experience like as a child? Did you grow up with a lot of books? Do you remember any favorites?

I liked books by W.H. Hudson. But what really impressed me at an early age was a cookbook for children which I can't remember the name of. But, both of my parents loved to cook. I made a recipe from the book called shrimp wiggle, sort of like a lobster newburg. That got me started reading and cooking as well and I still like to cook.

I never liked comic books, actually, I hated them. But I read everything else, even the back of cereal boxes.

Did you go to the library as a child?

We always went once a week on Saturdays. I grew up in the country in upstate New York on a farm. The library was four miles away in the nearest town, attached to the town hall in the main square. The librarian has always been my friend and would often suggest books that I might like. It would really get me reading more.

Were there any books that made a big impression on you earlier in your life?

Two books that were influential for me were *The Blue Nile* and *The White Nile*, (Alan Moorehead) about the discovery of the Nile. In 1964 I went to Ethiopia and it prompted me to read more about travel adventure, plant discovery, and where water comes from.

What books might we be surprised to find on your shelf?

Keep the River on Your Right by Tobias Schneebaum. He lived in the jungle with tribe of headhunters and studied queer primitive cultures.

The Bible, one of the world's wonderful books.

Do you have a collection of books? Are there any favorites that you go back to?

I always recommend to everyone Verlyn Klinkenborg, a naturalist, gardener and author of *The Rural Life*. Another book I like to recommend that is a favorite is *Green Thoughts: a Writer in the Garden* by Eleanor Perenyi. Very snarky, truly wonderful.

David Fairchild is another author I always go back to. He traveled the world for the U.S.D.A. (Department of Agriculture) in the 30s and 40s looking for fruits and vegetable that could flourish here. Some of his books are; *The World Grows Round my Door*, *The World was My Garden* and *Exploring for Plants*.

My grandfather's organic gardening book by J.I. Rodale, *How to Grow Vegetables and Fruits by the Organic Method*.

And of course, the cookbook collection.

What's the last book you recommended?

Green Thoughts by E. Perenyi.

Is there a famous author that you ever wanted to meet? If you could invite some authors to a dinner party who would you chose?

I would like to have a dinner party with Jean Rhys and Elizabeth Bishop. It would be really interesting to hear them converse after a few glasses of wine. Both Jean Rhys and Elizabeth Bishop are wonderful writers. In particular, most people don't get Jean Rhys. I'm not sure how widely read she is but she was both inspiring and tragic.

What do you plan to read next?

On trails: An Exploration by Robert Moore.

Is there any book that you have always meant to read but still haven't? Any highly rated books that you thought were over rated?

I should have read Proust; everybody's bugaboo.

Do you ever re-read? Books you return to?

I always go back to reading Beckett. Love Beckett. And of course, Elizabeth Bishop

Are there characters in fiction that draw you in as a reader?

I'm not thinking of specific characters but the writers who create them and draw me in. Colm Toibin is one of them.

When and where do you like to read? Describe your ideal reading experience.

Always and all over. I have several comfy reading spots in the house but my favorite one is sitting up in bed with a beer, Birdy, the parrot on my shoulder; ideally reading a good recommended book.

I like a book that talks to you: Jungian literature on the puer, (eternal boy) as a way of trying to understand myself. Getting older gives me more time to look back and allows me to remember more than I thought I could.

Why read

Why not? Reading is the best, it nourishes the mind, body, creativity, and spirituality and of course, knowledge.

Submitted by Jane Silvia, Portrait by Van Waring

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