

My Favorite Reads

By Marilyn Reeves

The advantage of growing senile is that old things that have been forgotten become new again. So it is with the books in my book case. Once in a while, when I'm between trips to the library, I'll pull one out I haven't read in a long time, having forgotten most of the details. But as I read along, some of the scenes start to come back to me and I'll think to myself, 'Oh, yeah. Now I remember.'

Take *Drowning Ruth* by Christina Schwarz, for instance – one of several books recommended by Oprah's Book Club. It's a rather dark, sad story about a woman who brings up her little niece as if she were her own child, after her sister drowns in the ice-bound lake near their home.

Another favorite is titled *Songs In Ordinary Time* by Mary McGarry Morris. The story is told through the eyes of a young boy about a flimflam man who comes to town and insinuates himself into their family, taking advantage of his single mother's vulnerability. I fell in love with the various characters and like to revisit them from time to time.

I love a good adventure story. One of the best is *As Far as My Feet Will Carry Me* by Josef W. Bauer. It's based on the true story of a man who escapes from a Siberian labor camp and walks over 2,000 miles to freedom! I've also enjoyed James Dickey's *Deliverance*, but having seen the movie version several times, I've set the book aside.

I have books by Upton Sinclair, Wally Lamb, John Grisham, Stephen King and Cormac McCarthy, to name a few of my favorite authors whose works lie dormant on my shelves. There's also a collection of short stories by Roald Dahl, and an anthology of essays in a book called *Joy Ride* by Dennis Payton Knight. Plus a spy thriller penned by Mark Irving. You may know him better as Irv Sternberg.

But then there are those rare authors whose works are truly an art form. With a few deft strokes of the pen, they have the uncanny ability to draw the reader inside the minds and souls of their characters. Such is the skill of a man named Andre Dubus.

Recently, I reread his understated gem of a masterpiece called *The House of Sand and Fog*. It's the story of two individuals in a dispute over the sale of a house: a naïve young woman, who inherited it from her father but loses it to foreclosure because she neglected to pay the taxes, and a proud but equally naïve middle-aged man from Iran, who purchased it at bargain price. Having come from wealth and privilege as a member of the Shah's inner circle, he was forced to flee his country and now scrabbles out a living by working on a road crew picking up garbage and moonlighting as a clerk in a mini-market. One's heart goes out to both these characters due to the poignant, insightful descriptions of their plight, so perfectly rendered by the author.

When I reread the story it moved me to tears. I had forgotten how tragically beautiful it was. And an old favorite suddenly became new all over again.