

A Rare Gem

By Marilyn Reeves

Every few weeks I'll drive over to the Schlessman Library at Lowry and bring back an armload of books. I've read a few biographies and historical accounts. I was fascinated by *The Path Between the Seas: The Creation of the Panama Canal* by David McCullough. I was mesmerized by *Endurance: Shackleton's Incredible Voyage* in the Antarctic. But my preference is nearly always works of fiction, which portray a different kind of truth. There are many categories of fiction, however, and the skill of the writers is as varied as the types of books available on the shelves.

While I may bring home a half dozen books, often only one or two may hold my interest long enough for me to read them through to their conclusion. But every so often I'll happen upon a real gem:

The River Warren by Kent Meyers. One of the best books I've ever read. A semi-truck driver puts on the gas and mows down half the buildings in town, killing himself and his wife. The story is about his relatives and others who each has a different take on the events. Fascinating, unforgettable characters as well as some hair-raising adventure. I laughed and I cried – I couldn't put it down.

American Rust by Phillip Meyer. Isaac English and Billy Poe, two 20-yr old friends, are involved in a murder of self-defense. Poe is attacked by a gang of hobos. Isaac throws a stone and kills one of the men. He goes on the run, hopping trains, wandering dirty and starving, without a destination. Poe takes the rap for him and goes to prison.

Mudbound by Hillary Jordan. Two friends – one black, one white – return from WWII to a ramshackle farm and the racial hotbed of a small town in the American South. Love, hate, ignorance and bigotry all come together in this spellbinding story.

And this past week I found another gem: *Descent* by a writer named Tim Johnston. The Courtland family is on vacation in Colorado. The beautiful 18-year-old daughter is looking forward to going to college on a track scholarship. While their parents sleep in at a motel near Granby, Caitlin coaxes her younger brother Sean into riding his bike alongside her as she goes for a run up the side of a nearby mountain. As they approach timberline, a driver wearing yellow sunglasses comes out of nowhere and slams into Sean, sending him catapulting into a nearby tree. While he lies there with his leg broken in a half dozen places, he hears the driver offer to take his sister back down the mountain to call for help. Barely conscious, in his mind Sean is frantically yelling at her, "Don't get in that car!"

Descent is the story of a family torn apart by a sense of loss and overwhelming guilt. A story of madness and despair. A story of courage, endurance, heroism and redemption. Crafted by a master wordsmith, Tim Johnston's well-chosen words are both lyrical and spell-binding. I've added *Descent* to my list of all-time favorite books. I simply could not put it down.