

# Read (kindled?) any good books lately?

The Catholic Review had its annual Summer Reading issue a few weeks ago, and putting it together gave me an opportunity to review my recent reading list and give thanks for good writers, and the family, friends and co-workers who keep giving me good reads on Christmas, Birthday, Father's Day, etc. Moving backward, here's what has provided me with refreshment and relief from screens and keyboards in recent months.

WHAT IS THE WHAT. Dug into Dave Eggers' rendering of the life of Valentino Achak Deng, one of the Lost Boys of Sudan, just after Independence Day for Southern Sudan. Powerful stuff from author of A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius. Thank you, sister Sharon and brother Bernd.

ALPHA BETTER JUICE or THE JOY OF TEXT. Roy Blount Jr. is a great man of letters, and loves picking apart the origins of their combinations. First encountered Blount with About Three Bricks Shy of a Load, his take on the absurd world of pro football and the Pittsburgh Steelers in the mid-1970s. Funny man. Thanks, Kate.

BORN TO RUN. A HIDDEN TRIBE, SUPERATHLETES, AND THE GREATEST RACE THE WORLD HAS NEVER SEEN. Courtesy of my son, Don, I finally got around to Christopher McDougall's 2009 analysis of the Tarahumara Indians of Mexico, high-priced footwear, North American diets and my favorite way to move. McDougall's anthropology of running and strong narrative makes for one of the best sports book I've enjoyed since Babe, The Legend Comes to Life, Robert Creamer's 1974 classic on Baltimore's favorite son, Babe Ruth.

NATIVE AMERICA, DISCOVERED AND CONQUERED. THOMAS JEFFERSON, LEWIS AND CLARK and MANIFEST DESTINY. In late May, during vacation in the Northwest, my wife Mary helped satiate my obsession with Lewis and Clark with a visit to Fort Clatsop, where their expedition spent the winter of 1805-06 outside present day Astoria, Oregon. A park ranger mentioned that American - and before it, European - expansionism can be traced to a 15th century papal bull, so I picked up

this work by Robert J. Miller, a lawyer, professor and Native American. It includes the wincing reminder that the Declaration of Independence includes reference to “merciless Indian savages.”

THE IMMORTAL LIFE OF HENRIETTA LACKS. My jet reading for flight out west was Rebecca Skloot’s best-seller on the ethics of medical research, against a backdrop of Baltimore in the 1950s. If you haven’t read it yet, do so. Now.

BOB DYLAN IN AMERICA. Thank you, editorial staff, for the birthday present of Sean Wilentz’s take on the life and times of my favorite poet. Bob borrows only from the best, and makes no bones about it. We’ve got very good seats for his Aug. 16 show in Columbia.

What books are on your recommended list?