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Review. Sedaris, David, Dress Your Family in Corduroy and Denim

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Q&A David Lee



Utah's first poet laureate and winner of the Western States Book Award in Poetry, David Lee this month publishes his ninth collection, *So Quietly the Earth* (see review, p. 74).

WHAT RECOMMENDATIONS DO YOU HAVE FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIANS WHO

WANT TO PROMOTE POETRY IN THEIR LIBRARIES?

My first suggestion is invite a poet to your library. Most poets, certainly this one, would scuttle to have the opportunity to read/book talk/Q&A on a new or recent book. Second, librarians could follow the lead of many good book stores and have a display section of "Staff Picks" from new and recently ordered poetry books. Third, poems or

sections of poems could be displayed in discreet and indiscreet locations throughout the library (e.g., "Dear John" broadsides in bathroom stalls, as well as poetry on bare walls or between paintings, announcements, and yard sale ads). By allowing readers to meet a coherent, lucid, beautiful, witty, serious, and even funny, poem, librarians—the custodians of culture—revitalize art and humanity.

NOW, HOW ABOUT SOME ADVICE FOR PATRONS?

Please clip out and post these instructions above the drinking fountain.

TEN EASY STEPS TO FALL IN LOVE WITH POETRY

1. Move slowly down the poetry aisles (the 800 section) with your fingertips lightly trailing along the spines.
2. Imagine millions of words all waiting to speak, sing, whisper, and cry to you.
3. Stop.
4. Look at the spine of the book that you are touching for no particular reason.
5. Pull that book off the shelf.
6. Open it randomly.
7. Use whatever light there is in the poetry section and read a poem.
8. If you like the poem, check the book out.
9. If not, try again tomorrow.
10. No matter what, try again tomorrow.

experience with anabolic steroids, an experiment he likens to jumping off a cliff. Here he captures the self-esteem that comes with having a bulked-up, supermale body. Then there's the time he answers an ad to "take a hospice patient on a date" and finds himself escorting a one-legged man and his mother on a tour of the countryside. Always funny, the essays range from tragic, in the case of his father's murder, to grotesque, in a piece about restaurant workers adding bodily fluids to unsuspecting customers' food. The book will please those wanting to see beyond the bland and commonplace. Recommended for large public libraries. [Previewed in Prepub Alert, *LJ* 2/15/04.]—Nancy R. Ives, SUNY at Geneseo

★ **SEDARIS, DAVID.** *Dress Your Family in Corduroy and Denim.* Little, Brown. Jun. 2004. c.288p. ISBN 0-316-14346-4. \$24.95. HUMOR

"My writing is just a desperate attempt to get laughs. If you get anything else out of it, it's an accident," claims author and play-

wright Sedaris. That may be, but one can't help but notice that this collection of essays about his childhood, his first major collection in four years, features a "kinder, gentler" Sedaris ("The End of the Affair" is an especially touching tribute to his partner Hugh). But make no mistake; Sedaris is still the master of the well-delivered scathing punch line—even if it is directed at himself. Fans of his previous work will find that this collection contains much of the snappy (and sometimes snippy) writing that has become his trademark. He is particularly skilled at creating grossly unflattering yet affectionate portraits of family members, as when Sedaris's brother presses the rewind button during the video of his daughter's first bowel movement. With *Me Talk Pretty* optioned for film treatment, Sedaris's star will only continue to rise. And he will undoubtedly have something both poignant and side-splitting to say about that as well. Highly recommended. [Previewed in Prepub Alert, *LJ* 2/1/04.]—Robin Imhof, Univ. of the Pacific Lib., Stockton, CA

Word: On Being a [Woman] Writer.

Feminist Pr., dist. by Consortium. Jul. 2004. c.256p. ed. by Jocelyn Burrell. ISBN 1-55861-467-2. pap. \$16.95. UR

"My way of finding a place in this world is to write one," claims Barbara Kingsolver in her contribution to this collection of over 20 essays in which writers like Sandra Cisneros, Assia Djebar, bell hooks, Margaret Atwood, Eavan Boland, and Edwidge Danticat offer a view into their creative worlds. Arranged thematically, the essays are as divergent as their authors, all challenging the reader to think outside the box while addressing issues like globalization, terrorism, racism, sexism, seeking parental approval for becoming a writer, and attempting to write while juggling motherhood and other realities. Their diversity not only strengthens the collection as a whole but also reinforces its core theme: women writers are not cut from one mold. A brief description of the author's life and career precedes each essay. Overall, this collection serves as a powerful tool to challenge the 21st-century difficulties that women face, particularly violence, censorship, and marginalization. Academic and larger public libraries that have collections in literature and women's studies should consider purchasing this highly recommended work.—Erica Swenson Danowitz, American Univ. Lib., Washington, DC

PERFORMING ARTS

KERNODLE, TAMMY L. *Soul on Soul: The Life and Music of Mary Lou Williams.*

Northeastern Univ. 2004. c.348p. illus. bibliog. index. discog. ISBN 1-55553-606-9. \$30. MUSIC

Mary Lou Williams was a musician's musician, respected by other jazz instrumentalists, particularly other pianists and arrangers. She was also the only person to have been a creative force in every era of jazz, from ragtime through modern. In this welcome biography, Kernodle (music, Miami Univ.) does not include new material or counter Linda Dahl's *Morning Glory: A Biography of Mary Lou Williams* (2000), but she does present a portrait gritty with the day-to-day adversities Williams faced in her early years and shows that she emerged more confident. While Dahl's book is a better read, Kernodle's knowledge of jazz and of music in general enables her to discuss Williams's playing with greater depth and specificity. She also more intimately portrays Williams as a woman contending with segregation and even the prejudice of fellow black musicians whose balky acceptance of her came only with their realization that she