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Curricula non medica.

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Special Report

Curricula non Medica

Mary Wleklinski, Mary Giardina, and Donald A. Stewart

Lunchtime conversations often revolve around the dumb, mundane, or familiar, sometimes on current rages or sensations, and may even lead to intriguing speculations—eg, how many neuroradiologists play musical instruments (especially the bagpipes), or what do neuroradiologists read outside of the ever increasing amount of professional journals and books—indeed, do they read other books at all? Believe it or not, your *AJNR* staff speculated on the latter question recently, with guesses ranging from total preponderance of science fiction to old Peanuts cartoons. We decided to find out (we were drinking cokes with lunch).

We wrote letters to a small sample of the ASNR membership, asking them to list five or so books that they read over the past five or so years, and to tell us (in a few sentences) how these books affected their thinking or why they liked them. The responses, we believe, are interesting, and we offer an array of them here with a minimum of editorial tampering.

R. A. Brinker. *Cracking India* by Bapsi Sidhwa—A master story of India in 1948 told from a young child's perspective. *Learning to Bow* by Bruce Feiler—a young American man living among and teaching Japanese children. *Child of the Revolution* by Wolfgang Leonhard—Events in Germany and Russia (1930–1947) told by a German communist. *Father Melancholy's Daugher* by Gail Godwin—Masterfully told story of a depression-ridden Episcopal priest. *The Golden Constant* by R. W. Jastram—The value of goods and services versus gold through the ages.

Mauricio Castillo. *The Prince of Tides* by Pat Conroy—Magnificent storytelling. Makes one face the pleasant and unpleasant episodes of childhood and fosters a positive outlook. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez—Makes us realize that despite the different characters that form a family, the family remains the center of society; families depend mainly on the mother for guidance and stability. *Cat's Eye* by Margaret Atwood—A journey through the fears of middle age, and how our memory of the past can help us get through difficult times. *Medicine: Preserving the Passion* edited by Phil Manning and Lois DeBakey—The working and learning habits of medicine's great men/women; provides role models in an era in which they are difficult to find. *Many Masks: A Life of Frank Lloyd Wright* by Brendan Gill—Genius and hard work can occur in other disciplines, despite personal eccentricities; originality triumphs and is respectfully remembered.

Dale A. Charletta. *Neuromancer* by William Gibson—An astonishing work of creative genius. Gibson weaves a visionary tale of computer hackers, ninjas, mega-corporations, the Yakuza (Japanese underworld), and clones; the prose is particularly well-crafted. *The Fall of Hyperion* by Dan Simmons—Another writer whose command of the English language equals his understanding of science; these are two of the most thought-provoking works of imagination that I have experienced. *Ender's Game* by Orson Scott Card—Thoroughly entertaining science fiction novel; Card's characterizations are superb. *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* by Douglas Hofstadter—Perhaps the most intellectually stimulating novel I have read. But one doesn't simply read this book—one engages in a battle of wits with it. Hofstadter deals with patterns that tie together varied disciplines such as mathematics, graphic arts, and music. *American Psycho* by Bret Easton Ellis—Horrible; profoundly disturbing; consummate evil. Ellis is either a madman or the author of a convincing character study of same. The fact that I can't decide is what bothers me most about this book.

Roy Cobb. *Surrender the Pink* by Carrie Fisher—Dryly humorous novel about the battle of the sexes. *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper

From the AJNR Editorial Office, Department of Radiology, RPSL Medical Center, Chicago, IL.

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Lee—Classic story about growing up, completely different when read as an adult. *All-Bright Court* by Connie Porter—Complex story of growing up black in the north—not the promised land so many southern migrants thought it would be.

Marshall Colburn. *Battle Cry of Freedom* by James M. McPherson—Best single volume describing events leading to and occurring during the Civil War. McPherson relates the political and social movements of those times, which resulted in the coming of the "second American Revolution." Very well-written and readable. *Freedom* by William Safire—An historical novel based on the events of 1862, the year Lincoln proclaimed the Emancipation. Purists may find fault with Safire's use of some of the historical events (out of sequence) but he is able to show more of the heart and soul of Abraham Lincoln than anyone else I have read. If you want to know Lincoln and understand his fundamental greatness, this book is a must. *From Beirut to Jerusalem* by Thomas L. Friedman—Friedman (Middle-East correspondent for the New York Times in the 1980s) clearly creates the framework necessary to begin to understand the events that occurred (and are still occurring) in Lebanon and Israel. For the first time, I have some understanding re the goals of the Israeli government and those forces that influence its behavior; more timely now than when it was published (1989). *The Last Lion* by William Manchester—The first volume, *Visions of Glory,* recounts the youth and manhood of Churchill to the time of Hitler's rise in 1933—helping one to understand the roots of Churchill's behavior, which led ultimately to his fearless determination and actions in all matters he believed were right—Manchester is a clear and interesting writer; an enjoyable book.

Donald A. Eckard. *The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy* by E. D. Hirsch, Jr., Joseph F. Kett, and James Trefil—Presents the body of knowledge that, according to the authors, "every American needs to know." Includes chapters on religion, mythology, literature, art, history, geography, the sciences, etc; very informative. *Clear and Present Danger* by Tom Clancy—Very entertaining, nonstop action book that is hard to put down; provides a possible answer to America's drug war. *The Way Things Work* by David Macaulay—Informative, entertaining discussion about the way many common devices work. *Straight* by Dick Francis—Entertaining, and the kind of thing I need to read some nights after a busy or stressful day at work. *A Bomb in the Brain* by Steve Fishman—True story of a journalist who underwent resection of a brain-AVM; thought provoking, instructive, but somewhat disturbing; brought me a little closer to my patients.

Ajax E. George. *Interview with the Vampire* by Ann Rice—One of my all time favorites; profound and disturbing images of power, passion, love and despair. *Growing Up* by Russell Baker—Charming and witty autobiography that leaves you convinced that the old, downhome values are worthwhile after all. *Henry Miller: A Life* by Robert Ferguson—Both debunks the myths regarding Henry Miller and, at the same time, humanizes him. *The Colossus of Maroussi* by Henry Miller—After reading this, you feel you have been on one of the best vacations of your life to one of the most exciting places in the world. *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* by Oliver Sacks—Finally understood what Alzheimer disease really means.

Robert I. Grossman. *Iron & Silk* by Mark Salzman—Interesting narrative of modern China. Captured the spirit of the country from a recent college graduate's perspective. Gave insight into how people think. *Men at Work* by George F. Will—Tremendous depth about the game of baseball. If you enjoy numbers and statistics, this book captures those elements of baseball. *Barbarians at the Gate* by Bryan Burrough and John Helgan—Fantastic story about RJR Nabisco takeover. *Liar's Poker* by Michael Lewis—Good story about life at an investment banking firm. *The Bonfire of the Vanities* by Tom Wolfe—Well-written novel about a bond salesmen and his downfall.

William Hanafee. *Golf Begins at 50* by Gary Player—After neuroradiology, there is plenty to look forward to.

Ric Harnsberger. *The Grifters* by Jim Thompson—Stunning insight into the world of the con-artist. Wonderfully written. *The Prince of Tides* by Pat Conroy—Conroy is a master of the English language. Compelling look at the dark side of violent inner workings of a southern family with an abusive parent as well as an episode of abuse from an outside source. *The Mists of Avalon* by Marion Zimmer Bradley—Enthralling escape into Arthurian lore. Leave the 20th century for the mists of Avalon. *The Clan of the Cave Bear* by Jean M. Auel—Odyssey into prehistoric man's developing culture. I loved the way it made me view the modern male/female conflicts from a prehistoric perspective. *Sundog* by Jim Harrison—Charts the life of a man "not confined by

doing the expected and the appropriate." Having been so confined, the vicarious ride was an eye-opener.

Joe Horton. *Rising Sun* by Michael Crichton—Sex, violence, and image processing (Really!). *Money is Love* by Richard Condon—Funniest novel I've ever read—and I've read a lot. You have to find it in used bookstores, as it is out of print. *The Sum of All Fears* by Tom Clancy—Great escape. *Journey Through Genius* by William Dunham—Tour through developments of mathematical thought, illustrated through proofs of theorems. *Shibumi* by Trevanian—On the surface, a sort of spy thriller, *but* this is to thrillers what *Moby-Dick* is to a wildlife and fishing manual. Deeply philosophical.

Stephen A. Kieffer. *The Winds of War* and *War and Remembrance* by Herman Wouk—Amazing (mostly true) story of bigotry and prejudice leading the world into its worst debacle in history. The author (an orthodox Jew) shows remarkable ability as he writes in the first person as the main character (an archetypical Anglo-Saxon Protestant naval officer). Remarkable insights into how the innate carelessness and inbred anti-Semitism in major governments (including the US State Department) led to the Holocaust. Beautifully written! Also suggests a *possible* explanation for Pearl Harbor; Roosevelt's inner circle may have allowed it to happen in order to get the United States into World War II. *The Coming Fury* by Bruce Catton—Well-written (almost scholarly in form, but filled with action and interest) history of the major events and political philosophy that led to the Civil War. Points out how the failure of key persons, and the populace as a whole, to take the aggressive movements of "far out" zealots seriously at a crucial time led eventually to the costliest (in human lives) war in US history. There is a common thread here between this book and Wouk's (above). *Lust for Life* by Irving Stone—Beautiful, almost heart-rending, story of the life of Vincent Van Gogh, a remarkable, "driven" individual who had to endure the worst aspects of poverty (hunger, starvation, and disease) because he could not bring himself to paint in the accepted style of his time. He eventually became deeply depressed and committed suicide. A remarkable talent who was unable to sell a single canvas in his lifetime. Insight: this book offers a portrait of the individual who "marches to a different drummer" with perseverance. All of us encounter such people in our lives and work; the key is to be able to recognize the true talent and encourage it to blossom to its full potential! *Murder on the Orient Express* by Agatha Christie—Light, fluffy fare, full of holes and unexplained dangling incidents. Entertaining mystery, but no real "message" here. *The Russia House* by John Le Carré—Remarkable story that presaged the fall of communism in Russia and Eastern Europe. Beautiful insights on human emotions (but not nearly as exciting as *The Little Drummer Girl*).

J. Robert Kirkwood. *Heartsounds* by Martha W. Lear—A powerful book about a physician with terminal heart disease, it discusses his and his wife's interaction with hospitals and other physicians and the difficulty in coping with the disease. It has had a permanent positive impact on how I deal with patients. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez—A look at life in Latin America that has applications in the United States. This book gives a strong sense of the little control that we have over life, but with an insight into the love and joy that help us deal with it. *Perestroika* by Mikhail Gorbachev—This book gave what proved to be a true insight into the Russian leader's mind. It also clearly pointed out the fatal flaw in Russian leadership, ie, they did not understand the power of the hope for freedom, and this hope's survival over years of repression. *A Theory of Medical Ethics* by Robert M. Veatch—A good discussion of the conflicting forces involved in both individual and societal medical decisions. *The Prince* by Niccolo Machiavelli—A good insight into the way those with power operate.

William W. M. Lo. *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* by David Hackett Fischer—This 946-page treatise is an in-depth look at the different values and customs of each of the four great waves of English speaking immigrants from 1629 to 1775 (the Puritans; the Royalists and their indentured servants; the Friends; and the North Britain borderlanders and northern Irelanders) and their profound influence upon subsequent immigrant ethnic groups that to this day control regional attitudes toward politics, education, government, gender, and violence. The book gave me an appreciation of the pluralism of the four British folkways in early America and how it may have provided a stronger foundation than a single culture could have for a free society. *Strangers from a Different Shore* by Ronald Takaki—It gave me knowledge and appreciation of the history and cultural adaptation of the various Asian ethnic groups in the United States. *Democ-*

racy or Babel–The Case for Official English by Fernando de la Pena—It helped to crystallize my own belief in the necessity and importance of a single common language for official use in the United States. *Iron & Silk* by Mark Salzman—I gained new knowledge and understanding of Chinese values and customs through the eyes of a foreigner. *I M Pei* by Carter Wiseman—It gave me an appreciation of the complexity and the immeasurable role of human realities in the creation, shaping, and end result of buildings through the biography of one of the great architects of the century.

Dixon Moody. *Dracula* by Bram Stoker—One aspect of this novel is especially fascinating to me because I have become interested in Jean-Martin Charcot. This book was published in 1897, just four years after Charcot's death. Professor Charcot is mentioned in *Dracula* in the context of hypnotism and it points out that Charcot was a media sensation. By inviting lay people into the demonstration theater of the Salpetriere to witness hypnotism, Charcot opened himself up to charges of outright fraud and "quackery." Please, don't anyone waste time reading this poorly written book! *J-M. Charcot 1825-1893, His Life–His Work* by Georges Guillain—This man made an impact on neurology and neuropathology in the 19th century equal to the impact of cross-sectional imaging in the 20th century over a similarly short time span. A tabulation of his *original* discoveries would fill up this page. *Angels: An Endangered Species* by Malcolm Godwin—I never knew there were so many angels! A review of biblical text, myth, and apocrypha as they pertain to angles. *Prospects for Faculty in the Arts & Sciences* by William G. Bowen and Julie A. Sosa—Predicts a golden age for youngsters with PhDs in the arts and sciences reaching the job market in this decade. *The Path to Power* by Robert A. Caro—A look at the workings of politics by a study of the ultimate political animal (Lyndon Johnson).

Paul F. J. New. *The Source* by James Michener—Very evocative of early man, his emerging religious beliefs, development and the power of fanaticism. *A Brief History of Time* by Stephen Hawking—Insight of the mind of a genius who is incomprehensible vocally due to a degenerative disease, on a subject of the least comprehensible dimensions. *2001: A Space Odyssey* by Arthur C. Clarke—A fine story by the best science fiction writer since Jules Verne. *The Last of the Breed* by Louis L'Amour—A gripping modern adventure tale, incorporating successful application of primitive human skills. *Flight of the Old Dog* by Dale Brown—Simply a good yarn about a military flying adventure.

John Pile-Spellman. *Sexual Personnae* by Camille Paglia—Stimulating thoughts on the role of sexuality on and throughout history. *A History of Private Life* by Philippe Aries and Georges Duby—Fascinating chronicle of all life's aspects from pagan Rome to Byzantium. *From Beirut to Jerusalem* by Thomas L. Friedman—Provides in-depth cultural insight into the Middle East imbroglio and the threat of religious fundamentalism. *The House of Morgan* by Ron Chernow—A powerful history of the development of modern finance and the abuses of capitalism. *Love in the Time of Cholera* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez—Simply the most wonderful tale of love and romance.

Eric Russell. *Silent Coup* by Len Colodny and Robert Gettlin—Well-researched history of Watergate and the Nixon White House. Uncovers the basis of John Dean's key role and Woodward's connections to Alexander Haig leading to the scoop in the Washington Post. *It* by Stephen King—Horror fiction in the form of a classic novel. Disturbing childhood relationships that we all can relate to. Great literature. *A Brief History of Time* by Stephen Hawking—Enables universal perspective. Frees the mind to consider the basis of existence and religion. Escape from small-mindedness.

James A. Scatliff. *Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*—I had read most of Hemingway's novels but not many of his short stories. This book includes his first 49 with a preface by Hemingway. *The Hunt for Red October* by Tom Clancy—Clancy's knowledge of high technology as used by the navy is amazing. The story was fascinating as well as scary. I went on to read *Red Storm Rising* and *Patriot Games*, by the same author. *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy—I had never read much Hardy. My daughters rented the video of "Tess." I watched it and was intrigued by the film. It prompted my reading of the book. Both the book and the movie are marvelous recreations, I believe, of 19th century "Wessex." The chapter notes were especially interesting and helped me understand an era as well as a language long since gone. *The First Man in Rome* by Colleen McCullough—I have always been interested in Greek and Roman history. Ms McCullough has done incredible research on Rome circa 100 B.C., putting together what

seems to be almost historically accurate fiction. I also learned that clivus is an inclined road on the Palatine hill in Rome, and that "insula" was a nine-story or so apartment house in ancient Rome, and not an island. *The Prince of Tides* by Pat Conroy—The book was particularly intriguing because—having lived in the southeast for 25 years—southeastern coastal areas are well known to me and my family. Its people were not as well known to me until Conroy brought forward characters like Wingo, his mother, father, and siblings. Conroy, although a verbose writer, has put together true characterizations. The southeast that is depicted, as well as the people in it, make a good counterpoint for the New York themes.

W. J. Sickels. *The Blind Watchmaker* by Richard Dawkins—Nonfiction. A very interesting look at evolution and the complex creatures that have developed through it. *Grammatical Man* by Jeremy Campbell—Nonfiction. A consideration of how information is passed in various systems by encoding with rules (grammar) to counteract entropy and noise. *Maneaters* by Peter Hathaway Capstick—Nonfiction. This one will give you a sense of what it's like without the comforts and securities of our civilization, where the big cats live. *Chaos* by James Gleick—This one gives you an appreciation of how oversimplified science used to be. *King Solomon's Ring* by Konrad Lorenz—I had never read it earlier but I wish I had. An introduction to animal communication.

John C. Stears. *Money and Class in America* by Lewis Lapham—To help understand our social stratification. *From the Land of the Totem Poles* by Aldona Jonaitis—To understand and appreciate the splendid northwest native cultures. *WLT* by Garrison Keillor—For fun. *Whiteout: Lost in Aspen* by T. Conover—Semifactual description of the 50-year degradation of an exhilarating common town to a "destination" devoid of any true depth or value.

Matthew J. Stern. *Wanderings* by Chaim Potok—Learn about history and roots. With the Middle East a "hotbed," I thought I should know more about its civilization and Jewish roots. *Atlas of Warfare* by Richard Natkiel—Strategies interest me. I wondered why some armies lost and others won and what made great strategists great. Many strategies still apply today. *Summer of '49* by David Halberstam—To explore a moment irrelevant to history but relevant to the world. The line from Paul Simon's song, "Mrs. Robinson," "Where have you gone Joe DiMaggio?" has new meaning. *Sotheby's Guide to Classic Wines and Their Labels* by David Molyneux-Berry—To learn more about that which enhances meals and makes your palate dance.

Phillip Stratemeier. *In Search of Schrödinger's Cat* by John Gribbin—Essay on quantum physics, light reading but stimulating. *How to Father a Successful Daugher* by Nicky Marone—I have two daughers. *Silent Coup: The Removal of a President* by Len Colodny and Robert Gettline—Nixon's resignation—alternative viewpoints as to why and how. *Ike the Soldier* by Merle Miller—I read this out of an interest in the history of the war years. *Rickover & the Nuclear Navy* by Francis Duncan—I was in the navy and have a fascination for submarines—Rickover was the right man at the right time.

Conclusion

Although our science fiction prediction was not completely off, we do feel a bit sheepish about underestimating the scope of your interests. While the subject matter here ranges from military history to foreign cultural studies to leisure activities like golfing, wine tasting, and investing, we were heartened to find that the subjects of medicine and science come up in your pleasure reading too. Was our sample large enough to establish a correlation between neuroradiologists and Gabriel Garcia Marquez? Will we see a book group at the next annual meeting? Many thanks to the participants. Now, everyone get ready for that AJNR bagpipe survey. . . .