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**Tomorrow Most Likely (Chronicle Books, 2019) Picture Book (for 3-6 year-olds)**

by Dave Eggers and illustrated by Lane Smith

reviewed by: Nori Morganstein, Youth Services Librarian/Assistant Director

Sometimes famous novelists attempt books for young children and the results are a mess. And sometimes famous novelists join forces with famous illustrators and the results are pure magic. Thankfully, **Tomorrow Most Likely** falls into the magical category. Dave Eggers, famous for *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*, among other books, does a fantastic job writing for children. It doesn’t hurt that Lane Smith, famous in the Children’s book world for *The Stinky Cheese Man* and other *Fairly Stupid Tales*, among other books, is the illustrator and brings this story to life.

Eggers did his research. The book that kept jumping into my mind when reading this was Dr. Seuss’s *Oh, the Places You’ll Go!* Both books are written in the second person. And both books have a very similar, positive message of there being so much more to come. I can see adults enjoying this book as much children. Like *Oh, the Places You’ll Go!* this book would make a great graduation present, with lots of talk of tomorrow. Also, this book would make a great bedtime story. What better way to calm down an anxious, scared, worried, or sad child than by reading about all the possibilities of tomorrow? The book explains that tomorrow most likely there will be a blue sky, a squirrel, cereal, a door leading to the world, a song, a plane high in the sky, a bug, a good smell, a new stone, etc. Tomorrow, there will most likely be great things to experience. As the book says, “Tomorrow most likely will be a great day because you are in it.”

There’s a familiar sounding rhyme scheme and repetition to the story that works for a great, comforting going-to-bed story. The book is also just so positive. It makes tomorrow sound amazing. The pictures also make tomorrow look amazing. Everything is so colorful and happy looking. Lane Smith does a great job of making the ordinary look fantastical. Little green bugs look like sad, giant monsters. Found stones look like brains. Music looks like magic spells. And the city in the background is a rainbow of beautiful shapes and colors.

There’s also a sense of humor to the story that reminded me a little bit of the famous humorous picture book creator, John Klassen.

It’s almost as if someone sat down, and wrote a list of all the things a successful picture book has, and then made this book. It has a little bit of everything. I’ve now, personally, read the book four times, while writing this review, and every time I finish it, I smile. The book leaves you calm, excited for the future, and happy. What else can we ask for?
Highly Recommended - Brief Reviews by Sue Carr

**Fiction:**
**The Tattooist of Auschwitz**  
by Heather Morris.

This love story is based on the experiences of Lale Sokolov, a Slovakian Jew imprisoned in Auschwitz from 1942 to 1945. Because he is able to speak several languages he is given the job of tattooing incoming prisoners. And with this privileged rank he is able to smuggle food to keep his fellow Jews alive. In the course of tattooing recent arrivals, he tattoos a number on the arm of a young, terrified woman, Gita. He is so taken with her that he vows that someday he will marry her.

**Where the Crawdads Sing**  
by Celia Owens

Kya's mother, leaves her family after years of abuse from her husband...Kya is 6 years old. Her brother also leaves after a bit. She is now alone in their shack on the marshy coast of North Carolina. She manages to scavenge enough food to keep herself alive and slowly learns to accept help and love along the way. This is Owens first novel, a tale of survival, coming-of-age, love, mystery and redemption. Don't miss it.

**Non-Fiction:**
**Barracoon: The Story of the Last "Black Cargo"**  
by Zora Neale Hurston, edited by Deborah G. Plant

In 1927, Hurston, traveled to Alabama to interview Cudjo Lewis, a survivor of the Clotilda, the last know slave ship to cross the Atlantic from Africa to the US. He relates his story of having been captured by Africans, held in barracoons (wooden cages), brought to the US as cargo, and forced to work in the fields until 1865. At that time he is freed and left to manage on their own. He and others in his community founded Africatown. Truly a difficult story but how fortunate we are to have it in Cudjo's words... A "powerful tribute to the disremembered and the unaccounted."

**Unexampled Courage: The Blinding of Sgt. Isaac Woodard and the Awakening of President Harry S. Truman and Judge J. Waties Waring,**  
by Richard Gergel.

*Unexampled Courage* fills in the details of the horrifying story of Sgt. Isaac Woodard, an African-American veteran, as he was returning home after World War II...He was beaten and blinded by a sheriff in Kentucky. When President Harry Truman learned of this and other cases, he took up the cause of improving civil rights in the United States. This led to the forming of the Civil Right Commission in 1946 and in 1948, the publishing of "To secure these rights", the measures to deal with ensuring "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" for everyone.

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Almost since the advent of the public school system the Supreme Court has taken and decided cases that have helped shape how public elementary and secondary education is structured. Because of the sheer size of the public school system, approximately 1/6 of the U.S. population, those Supreme Court decisions have been momentous. In this magnificent 429-page book, Justin Driver, a law professor at the University of Chicago Law School, gives a comprehensive look at the Supreme Court's involvement with public schools.

Driver begins with 19th and early 20th century cases, including an Augusta, Georgia case that ruled on the school board's decision to turn its only Black high school into an elementary school and two cases involving Jehovah's Witnesses' refusal to salute the flag. Driver then tackles more recent court decisions thematically. He addresses freedom of speech issues; school suspensions, corporal punishment, and "zero tolerance"; equal protection; and religious freedom. Under equal protection he examines the most famous court decision on education, *Brown v. Board of Education*, and subsequent cases that shaped how *Brown* was implemented. Similarly, in what I would argue was the second most important Supreme Court education ruling (*Tinker v. Des Moines*), Driver traces the history of court decisions involving student free speech rights, a history that tracks through lewd and indecent speech, censoring a school newspaper, and the infamous Bong Hits 4 Jesus case.

Lest the previous paragraph suggests that this book is simply a dry recitation of cases and decisions, let me dispel those ideas. While Driver does summarize majority and dissenting opinions, he also discusses newspaper and law review reactions. Of equal importance he discusses how the individuals involved in bringing suit were often the recipients of community rage.

While it is impossible to encompass the broad sweep of *The Schoolhouse Gate* in a short review I will focus on one case that I think shows the breadth of Justin Driver's writing. The case, *Plyler v. Doe*, was brought in the 1970's by Humberto Alvarez who had illegally crossed into the United States in 1974, settled in Tyler, Texas, and subsequently brought his family to Tyler where the children enrolled in the public schools. Texas law refused funds to localities for education of non-citizens and even permitted their exclusion from public schools. Based on this Texas law, the superintendent, James Plyler, told the Alvarez family that they were required to pay a one thousand dollar tuition, equivalent to four thousand dollars today, to remain enrolled in school. Unable to raise these funds on his meat packer's salary, Alvarez brought suit. By doing so Alvarez ran the risk of deportation as well as enduring the enmity of co-workers and the larger community. The case was decided in 1982 with a 5-4 decision upholding the rights of immigrants to receive an education. Justice William Brennan, an Eisenhower appointee, wrote the majority opinion. In it he wrote that children should not be penalized for the unlawful actions of their parents, that there is a hardship from the lack of an education, and that upholding the Texas law would create a shadow population within the United States. In essence, Brennan argued that education maintained the fabric of society. Chief Justice Warren Burger wrote for the dissent, suggesting that the Texas statute was a valid exercise of constitutional authority and that the majority engaged in unwarranted judicial action and that by so doing they "exemplified a troubling tendency 'to become an omnipotent and omniscient problem solver'", a theme that resonates through many decisions. While the Texas statute was the only statute of its kind in the nation, Irma Herrara, an attorney for the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, was convinced of the over-riding importance of this decision for the status of Mexican-Americans. "Had we lost, many other states would have attempted to pass similar legislation." John Roberts, who at the time was a special assistant to Attorney General William French Smith, saw the Justice Department failure to file an amicus brief as a missed opportunity, believing that such a brief might have swayed the vote to uphold the Texas statute. Years after the decision, Supt. Plyler felt that it was a correct one: "I'm glad we lost … so that those kids could get educated." All thirteen students involved in the case became lawful permanent residents of the U.S., ten graduated from high school in Tyler, and many went on to good jobs, including Laura Alvarez, Humberto's daughter, who became a teacher's aide in the Tyler school system.

The court is often accused of simply reflecting social attitudes and opinions. In the Plyler case the court was well outside public opinion. In 1995 a Gallup poll asked whether respondents favored or opposed providing public education, school lunches, and other benefits to children of illegal immigrants. Sixty-seven percent opposed while only 28% favored. While conservative opinion continued well after the case to suggest the court over-stepped its bounds, Driver dispels their "citizen only" argument by noting that the Equal Protection Clause, the basis of this suit, applies to any person within its jurisdiction, not just to citizens.

(continued on the next page)
Who is on the court matters. In 1968 Demetrio Rodriguez brought suit against the San Antonio school district for funding inequities. This case came before the Supreme Court in 1973 where a 5-4 majority sided with the school district. After the conclusion of the case, the attorney who represented Rodriguez commented that he never would have filed the case if he knew how the composition of the court would change in those few short years. Four of the five vote majority were Nixon appointees who came to the court after the case had begun.

This is a wonderful book. Justin Driver has not only given the reader a comprehensive look at the interaction of the Supreme Court and the public schools, he has placed the cases within the context of the larger society and how it views public education. For the tenacious reader, _The Schoolhouse Gate_ is a rewarding read.

Capitalism In America: A History
by Alan Greenspan and Adrian Woolridge
reviewed by Don Boink

The U. S. Federal Reserve was headed by Alan Greenspan for several years. He was considered a brilliant economist. So brilliant in fact it was considered almost impossible to understand him when he gave his reports. A story I like to tell is a quote from his wife, a well known TV personality, Andrea Mitchell. “It was six months before I realized he was proposing” she said. He is also the originator of the term “irrational exuberance”, relating to stock market prices.

This book is definitely a history of our national beginnings and its economy. From the most primitive and modest origin to the world’s leading economic power. What is brought out most vividly are certain concepts that were the basis of that dramatic evolution. First mentioned is the answer to productivity and its secret, innovation. Likewise is America’s tolerance for creative destruction. These ideas are covered and amplified throughout the book.

Unlike Greenspan’s reports this history is very readable. Its historical aspect is fascinating to follow and many details new and revealing to me. To see the overall picture in fairly concise form makes it quite enjoyable reading. The part played by the early immigrants is important to the success story as their contribution of inventions as well as innovations is highlighted. One omission that I noted was the absence of mention, except in passing early on in the book, of the great contribution Nicole Tesla made. Alva Edison is prominently covered but Tesla invented alternating current which far surpassed Edison’s direct current system and became universally accepted.

One of the biggest chapters covers the Depression. This followed a stock market crash in 1929. Although that was a devastating occurrence it was not the only factor. Poor management of the economy through interest rates and burdensome regulations added to the seriousness of downturn. One of the things that exasperated the economic problem was the Smoot- Hawley tariff of 1930. Trump says tariffs are easy, so far his aren’t working too well either. The depression lasted until 1939 when WW II started and business picked up rapidly.

The Republican mantra of “Smaller government and lower taxes” was very well exemplified during the administrations of Harding and Coolidge, both of which spent more time playing golf than governing. Sort of like Trump. The expression “creative destruction” is applied to the capitalistic habit of one company or idea succeeding another in the course of competitive activity that occurs and benefits the economy. Currently Bezos’ Amazon is a prime example.

Capitalism has been glorified and condemned over the centuries. Many think it needs to be constrained while others work to remove its shackles. This book seems to agree that too much regulation works against productivity. Overall the US is still considered the leader in most fields with China a close competitor. Based on our record of overcoming obstacles in the past the prospects for the future are positive. I strongly recommend the book for anyone interested in getting a perspective on our present state of affairs.
On Friday April the 25th, 1986 the world’s worst nuclear power disaster occurred in the Soviet republic of Ukraine. A nuclear power station near the city of Chernobyl, 84 miles north of the Ukrainian capital of Kiev (a city of 2.5 million inhabitants), had four operating reactors and two more under construction at the time of the disaster. Nuclear operators were running a routine test on reactor #4 when the reactor rapidly ran out of control with an unexpected surge of energy causing the reactor to explode blowing the top off the core spewing intense radiation into the environment. Efforts by the operators to control the power level by dropping the control rods into the core seemed to have had the opposite the intended effect by causing the reactor to go unstable.

The reactor design used at Chernobyl was not unique and was representative of a dominant reactor type in the Soviet Union which differed from the types of nuclear reactors used in the rest of the world. The reactor type, RBMK (Russian acronym), is a boiling water reactor that uses graphite control rods to control and to stop the reactor’s nuclear reactions. Modifications made to the control rods to increase the power output also tended to initially increase instead of decreasing the reactor’s power as they were lowered into the reactor. In the state the reactor was in after the test run this power increase boiled-off the cooling moderating water creating steam that blew off the top of the power plant.

The explosion left radioactive fires burning and a continual release of highly radioactive debris which was then carried by the prevailing winds over a large area of the Ukraine and also the neighboring republic of Belorussia (now Belarus). Within a day or so abnormal levels of radioactivity was detected outside of the Soviet Union primarily in the Scandinavian countries forcing the Soviet government to finally publicly announce the accident. The continuing spread of intense radioactivity over thousands of square miles forced the soviet authorities to take major risks in attempting to bring the situation under control. A number of fire fighting units were deployed without sufficient radiation monitors or protection resulting in many fatal doses (the government acknowledges 31 deaths). A continuing stream of helicopters were employed to drop both sand, cement and lead shot into the reactor opening to stop the radioactive dispersal. The heroic efforts employed were only marginally successful and took close to a half year to control the situation.

The power station employees lived in a nearby town of 50,000 people, Pripyat. This town had to be evacuated and a surrounding area of 1,000 square miles were closed off, possibly for centuries. Some fallout had also fallen on Kiev causing many families to send their children temporarily out of the city. The cost of the rehabilitation and protective activities associated with the Chernobyl disaster have been estimated to total around $125 billion. The exposure of millions of individuals to lower levels of radiation has been predicted to produce tens of thousands of premature deaths. Many thousands of Soviet troops were exposed to intense radiation levels for short periods of times (as short as a few minutes) in an effort to clean up the debris in the immediate power station environment. A trial was held charging seven power station employees with negligence in causing the disaster with resulting prison sentences ranging up to ten years. The government never officially acknowledged that the reactor design could have been at fault even though steps were taken to modify other reactors of that type to reduce any reoccurrence.

Adam Higginbotham does a great job in telling the story of the Chernobyl disaster. He has had access to many government files made available after the breakup of the Soviet Union. The story he tells brings out the relative indifference of the ruling elite to the welfare of individual citizens when issues relating to Soviet economic expansion or to any resulting loss of face to the government are involved. The accident occurred shortly after Mikhail Gorbachev came to power and was introducing his new Perestroika (Openness) policy. Controlling the flow of information about Chernobyl was a severe stress to the introduction of that policy. Midnight in Chernobyl is very well written and illustrated and covers many differing aspects of the Chernobyl story. An understandable primer into nuclear physics and reactor design is provide to aid the reader in dealing with the issues involved. The only real difficulty is keeping straight the unfamiliar Russian names but a Cast of Characters is provided as a reference. The author provides a fascinating account of this massive disaster that occurred over thirty years ago.
The Threat: How the FBI protects America in the Age of Terror and Trump
by Andrew G. McCabe
reviewed by Don Boink

The author, once the head of the FBI, was two days from retirement when he was fire by Donald Trump. That is not the reason this book was written. It is a call for the nation to recognize what is happening to our country. The very foundations of our democracy are under attack from the strange person now sitting in the White House. Who is this person and what is he doing that is so dangerous.

Read the book written by a public servant who has devoted the best part of his life to upholding the law of the land as a member of the nations preeminent law enforcement agency, the FBI. By citing several instances of “who done it?”, McCabe goes into the small details that constitute the case that is necessary to bring the miscreants to justice. It is not always a cut and dried matter. Often complications interfere.

Since 9/11 terrorism is a constant concern, both from abroad to domestic sources. A prime example is the Boston bombing, during the Boston Marathon in which several casualties were inflicted. The details of the investigation are fascinating to read. No doubt the more insidious types of crime are those committed by our own government. There have been famous cases of wrong doing such as the Watergate scandal, and the Clinton scandal, all discussed here, but none seem to compare with the current Mueller investigation.

What remains is the full release of the findings, if ever. Politics is more evident as the fly in the ointment than we have ever known in the past. No president has ever been more outrageously lying in his public statements and tweets and acting to obstruct justice than Trump. To some extent McCabe dwells on detail too much in my estimation. On the other hand he is doing what he feels is necessary to explain the meticulous care the FBI adheres to in doing its job. This administration is bent on discrediting anything that does not conform to its distorted notions.

Trump supporters turn a blind eye on all the unconventional behavior he exhibits. Especially the Republican legislators who go along with it. Occasionally someone uses the term "delusional". To me this is exactly the problem that we face. This book, The Threat, speaks directly to this problem.

The Lost Symbol
by Dan Brown
reviewed by Don Boink

I have read this book twice. Inadvertently. I didn’t remember reading it previously. Once into the story things began looking familiar but I still couldn’t bring it all to mind. In any event it all sounded interesting to me so I persisted. Rereading the review I’d written earlier I realized I had not fully brought out the essence of the book. That is, that most of the plot was based on Masonic rituals and the Ancient Mysteries that had been lost to present day understanding.

One of the central characters in the book is Peter Solomon, the head of the famous Smithsonian Institution and a 33rd degree Mason, the most prestigious degree in Masonry. The locale is Washington,D.C. with its great architecture and history and the central part that Masonry played in its formative beginnings. Our hero again is Robert Langford the famous symbologist and professor at Harvard University. He is a non-Mason, none-the-less he is well acquainted with the previously secret rituals and symbols that now are widely written about.

Soloman has two children, Zackary and Katherine. As is the family tradition, when Zackary reaches his eighteenth birthday he is to be presented with his inheritance. At the formal presentation his father makes a stipulation that he hopes will make his son a more responsible person rather than a ne’er do well. “Join the Masons and gain wisdom before assuming his fortune.” The boy scoffs at the notion and gathers up the portfolio that will affect the transfers to his name and stalks off. The next time they hear of him, years later, he is in a Turkish prison on drug charges. Soloman rushes over to arrange his release. Again he makes the case, either joining the Masons or staying in prison. He stays.

The next word they got was notification of Zackary’s death at the prison. This is the crux of the rest of the story. The episodes that follow lead us on an exhausting chase through the bowels of the Capital, the adjoining Library of Congress to the National Cathedral. All of the places cited are beautifully described and much is learned about our Capital together with the meaning of much of the Masonic movement and its fundamentals.
Becoming
by Michelle Obama
reviewed by Jim Mills

Becoming is Michelle Obama’s best-selling autobiography. The biography is divided into three segments. The first covers Michelle Robinson’s early life in south Chicago and her education at Princeton and at Harvard Law and her early career as a lawyer in Chicago. The second describes her meeting Barack Obama and their early life together and Barack’s rise as a political figure in the country. The final segment deals with their life in the White House after the 2008 election.

Michelle Obama was born to a middle class family in a racially mixed section of south Chicago in 1964. She and her older brother, Craig, grew up in a stable caring extended family that looked after their emotional needs and promoted their educational development. Michelle describes the white exodus from south Chicago to the suburbs exemplified by the transition in the images of her kindergarten and fifth grade classes. She also describes the barriers that society has placed on black advancement in the United States. While considering colleges she was told by a career advisor that she was not Princeton material. Through her dogged persistence Michelle did follow her older brother to Princeton and then on the Harvard Law School. As a lawyer she started her career at a noted law firm in Chicago.

It was during her second year at the firm where she met a first year Harvard law student, a gangly young intern from Hawaii, Barack Obama. Their relationship was slow to start but they gradually realized their common views of the world and a joint need to make their lives amount to something by making a significant contribution to society. Barack went on to become the first black editor of the Harvard Law Review. He returned to Chicago two years later as a greatly sought after lawyer. Michelle and Barack were married in 1992, with Michelle’s career turning in a more socially involved and less lucrative direction and Barack taking the plunge into politics. Barack was elected as an Illinois State Senator, made an unsuccessful run to be a US Representative and in 2004 was elected as a US Senator. Also in 2004 Obama was selected by John Kerry to give the Keynote Address at the Democratic National Convention. Kerry did not win the 2004 Presidential race but Barack’s inspirational speech brought him national prominence. Two year later that prominence led him to enter the 2008 presidential race. Michele noted in agreeing to Barack’s run for the presidency: “In the end it boiled down to this: I said yes because I believed that Barack could be a great president. He was self assured in a way that few people are. He had the intellect and discipline to do the job, the temperament to endure everything that would make it hard, and the rare degree of empathy that would keep him tuned carefully to the country’s needs.” In a photo-finish Obama won the Democratic nomination over Hillary Clinton and went on to be elected the first black US President in November.

The White House years were a dramatic shift in the life of the Obama family as it has been for virtually every occupant of the Executive Mansion. Mrs. Obama referred to life in the White House as living in a bubble that encased them for eight years. They lost most of the freedom of action that most private citizens enjoy. Every trip out of the White House including to the White House lawn must be co-ordinated with the Secret Service including Michelle’s quick trips to some of the local stores. Her daughters were accompanied daily to their school and even to daughter Malia’s first high school prom. Much of Michele’s narration in Becoming deals with the care and education of her daughters. She was very distraught when a prominent New York real estate developer, casino owner and reality show host, Donald Trump, very loudly questioned whether Barack Obama was born in the US and hence was not eligible to be president. She felt that these spurious accusations only stirred up resentment of the first black American President and endangered her children’s well being. She said: “Donald Trump, with his loud and reckless innuendos, was putting my family’s safety at risk. And for this, I’d never forgive him.” Little did she know that that real estate developer would succeed her husband as president and would make it a priority to essentially undo all of his accomplishments during his eight years in office.

At the end of eight years in the White House Michele Obama summarized her husband’s accomplishments: “Barack, meanwhile, had managed to reverse the most serious economic crisis since the Great Depression. (Over 800,000 jobs were lost during his first month in office followed by 75 consecutive months of job growth during his terms in office and two out of three of the big auto makers going bankrupt in 2009.) He’d helped to broker the Paris Agreement on climate change, brought tens of thousands of troops home from Iraq and Afghanistan, and led the effort to effectively shut down Iran’s nuclear program. Twenty million more people had the security of health insurance. And we’d managed two terms in office without a major scandal. We had held ourselves and the people who worked with us to the highest standards of ethics and decency, and we’d made it all the way through.” She famously said at the 2016 Democratic Convention in referring to the Republican raucous campaign, “when they go low, we go high”. It remains to be seen how well future administrations can stand up to the standards that were set by the Obamas’ time in the White House.
Horizon
by Barry Lopez
reviewed by Jim Mills

Author and journalist Barry Lopez has had a very full and fascinating life, traveling to many far corners of the Earth, which he describes in his most recent work, Horizon. In many of these journeys, Lopez has been an active contributor to scientific activities in such disparate areas as East Africa, the Arctic and Antarctica.

The author, who currently lives in Oregon, begins his sojourn near to home describing the natural surroundings and history of Oregon’s wild Cape Foulweather. Throughout this work Lopez discusses his experiences exploring the region, the history of each area, the exploits of the early discoverers, and the oppression of natives by the more recent arrivals. Lopez has had a truly exciting life combining adventurous travel with scientific researches over many decades.

In the Cape Foulweather segment Lopez discusses the 18th century explorations of the English Captain James Cook and the impact of a little known American seaman, Ranald MacDonald on the opening of Japan to the West in the mid-19th century. Another trip is made to Ellesmere Island in arctic Canada to participate in an archeological exploration that tracks the migration of various native groups including the impact of the Viking intrusion into the area. In East Africa he participated in archeological digs at Lake Turkana in Kenya where fossil remains of early humans and their artifacts have been found. Lopez describes the environmental problems faced by workers in the field on these scientific field studies. This particular archeological site is run by Richard Leakey whose parents initiated the study of early human activity in the area.

In the Galapagos Lopez covers the early history of the islands including the consequential visit by Charles Darwin in the 1830s. He also describes the conflicting interests between the small native population and the tourist industry that has flooded the area with countless visitors in the last few decades. Through the years the author has made numerous trips to Australia. In Tasmania he describes the surviving prisons that were used in the early 1800s to house British prisoners who were transported out of England. He describes the living conditions that they were forced to face and their gradual adaptation to life in on a new continent. In the north-western part of the country, he visited, current mining operations that have been extracting and shipping immense quantities of iron to China. While this economic activity has given a major economic boost to Australia, the negative impact on the local environment and on the declining native populations have been significant. Lopez does cover the horrendous treatment of the native population (Aborigines) by the immigrant British and also the disruption of the native marsupial animals from imported creatures.

Lopez has also had numerous visits to Antarctica. In the Antarctic peninsula he discusses the heroic exploits of Ernest Shackleton in extracting his entire crew of explorers who were stranded on the sea ice when their ship was destroyed in 1914-15. Other topics covered are the earlier race to the South Pole by Scott and Amundsen. In his own exploits the author describes being flown into the Trans-Antarctic mountains with a scientific crew to search for meteorites on the ice surface. These objects tend to accumulate in the area due to patterns of ice movements and the ablation of ice from the surface. The group camped out in extreme weather conditions at over 7,000 feet not too far from the South Pole with frequent high winds adding to the discomfort of the low temperatures. The author also describes his experiences spending a few days at the South Pole station itself and at the giant American base at McMurdo Sound. Lopez is an experienced scuba diver and he participated in a dive through the sea ice near McMurdo where an access hole was blown through the 6 foot thick ice. The sea water was only about a half degree above freezing and visibility was virtually unlimited increasing the possibility of wandering too far away from the only exit from the watery world. Lopez showed his experience as a diver in dealing with the dangers involved, this experience adding to the extent of his venturous life.

Throughout Lopez’s description of his travels and exploits, the author emphasizes the pervasive mistreatment of local populations and also the rugged lives of workers forced to work on sailing ships and in poorly maintained mines. This theme of man’s oppression of his fellow man takes an equal part in the narrative to his own experiences. Lopez shows himself to be greatly concerned about these issues and to highlight events of the past that many of us might not be aware. The pressures of industry and commerce have so frequently run roughshod over the welfare of individuals and Lopez has taken upon himself to bring these events to our attention as a means of curbing the future exploitation of mankind and also of our natural environment. Lopez writes well and this 500 page book is riveting and definitely a page turner. It is an inspiration to see an individual who has led such a stimulating and fascinating life.
Principles  
by Ray Dalio  
reviewed by Don Boink

This is a tome dedicated to the world of investing. The author is the head of the world’s largest hedge fund handling over 160 billion dollars. His net worth is over 18 billion. This past year his income was 3 billion. The book “Principles” is a compendium of his laboriously derived bits of wisdom as he won and lost millions of dollars in the course of forty years of building the world’s largest and most successful hedge fund. The fund is called Bridgewater.

Ray Dalio’s management style has been criticized as too severe and he has welcomed the opportunity to discuss it. Turnover in employment has been high. “You either love it or hate it” he says. Some say it is more like a religion or a cult. However you look at it, it is a proven money maker. Large companies and even sovereign funds are clients of the firm. Dalio puts out an advisory letter anyone can subscribe to. Dalio says wealth inequality is a national emergency and is a firm believer that wealthy people such as himself, along with Buffett and Gates, should be taxed more heavily because of this problem. He is a very philanthropic person also.

The first part of the book is an account of his background from a low income family on Long Island to one of the world’s wealthiest men. The major portion is devoted to listing the numerous principles he has found to be essential to his success. It is fascinating to see his method of analyzing something like the commodities market. Take pork bellies. To make a bet on their value in the future he goes back to the cost of feed needed, then the influence of weather, and any other factor that needs consideration. He did this all on paper to begin with, until computers came along and made it possible to create algorithms. This freed up much time.

As his company grew he became more burdened by management details with less time for stock analysis. To improve worker efficiency and satisfaction he had each employee evaluated as to their strengths and weaknesses so that their assignments were better related to their abilities. He called his baseball cards. Assigning tasks in areas a person is strong in make for more efficiency and better results. Since the book’s publication (I’d never heard his name before), it seems I see his name frequently now. He is currently the richest man in America. Must be he knows what he’s talking about. If you digest this information and apply it properly you too can make a fortune.

Brief Answers To Big Questions  
by Stephen Hawking  
reviewed by Don Boink

This is the eighth and final book by Hawking. He passed away recently. When he was in his twenties he contracted the Lou Gehrig disease called ALS. Despite this he married and had two children, a boy and a girl and lived into his seventies. He was a brilliant cosmologist. His work involved conceiving The Big Bang Theory. He collaborated with the top scientist of our era and through mathematical calculation developed numerous concepts about the universe and our own galaxy.

This book is a fascinating collection of questions and his answers. Here are the question in the order in which they appear. Is there a God?. How did it all begin? Is time travel possible? What is inside a black hole? Is there other intelligent life in the universe? How do we shape the future? Should we colonize space? Can we predict the future? Will we survive on earth?

He has great faith in Artificial Intelligence and its potential benefit for humanity. At the same time cautions the need to use it wisely lest it controls us. He is an optimist regarding future generations and the potential for continuing the expanse of knowledge His chapter on God is his rationale for finding no need for a creator. As a typical scientist he recognizes only material things, that is matter. To me that leaves out some essential things like Life, Truth, and Love. If he considered those he might just stumble upon a different conclusion.

His chapter on “Black holes” is fascinating, if you can imagine the scale of what is involved. More recently the subject of “dark matter” has become a hot topic. His explanation of what that entails is also interesting. The biggest idea besides multiple universes is the necessity he finds in our eventual ability to navigate space for the purpose of colonizing a planet for the human race to survive. Eventually he feels that life on Earth will be unsustainable. Stephen Hawking is buried in Westminster Abbey.
As the author points out our home is also, whether we like it or not, a home to a wide variety of other creatures. Most of these fellow residents live their lives and we are never aware of their existence. These creatures represent a cross-section of the wildlife endemic to the area where we live including microbes, fungi, arthropods (insects, spiders, etc.) and small mammals. One insidious guest are the fungi. They can destroy most anything including wall board and, given enough time, even stone. Most of these creatures, however, are beneficial to us and in the effort to get rid of those that we regard as pests we use a broad brush and eliminate our beneficial guests as well.

This dictum is particularly true on the microscopic level. Out of millions of microbe species only 50 or so are considered to be deadly to humans. Many antibiotics and germicides destroy these benevolent microbes to our disadvantage. The existence of harmless bacteria has been shown to be beneficial in keeping the pathological microbes at bay. At the insect level, the presence of spiders is a good indication that the number of other insects pests are being controlled. Among larger inhabitants of your home there is the eternal cat - mouse predator prey relationship. The author mentioned that there is a parasite called Toxoplasma gondi whose life cycle is dependent on cats catching mice and the parasite seems to alter the mice’s behavior in a way to increase the likelihood that the mouse gets caught. Along the same line, the author feels that our overall well being is improved as the home environment more closely matches that found outdoor. A wide variety of exposures to the natural world aids in our bodies defenses to infections. The author recommends spending a large portion of our lives outdoors as a recipe for good health.

The author takes this line of reasoning farther. It appears that the increase in allergies and diseases such as asthma can be countered by exposing infants to a wider range of experiences of the outdoor environment. The widespread use of antibiotics and disinfectants in the home and even more so in hospitals have created a class of resistant pathogenic bacteria. There is a continual race to develop new antibiotics in an effort to try to control these deadly strains as they evolve to become less vulnerable to these new agents. The author feels that so many beneficial and neutral microbes are being killed that considerable room has been created for the spread of the antibiotic resistant infectious bacteria. A change in the way we deal with infectious diseases by not using the widespread application of antiseptic agents that don’t discriminate between friend or foe is what is needed. The prevalence of the pathological bacteria could be controlled by enveloping them in multitudes of other microbes to keep the dangerous ones in check. The use of these natural controls seems to be the best course to following in most instances. The concepts that the author promotes in Never Home Alone have been advocated by many other observers in recent years. Another recent excellent book addressing this issue is Ed Yong’s, I Contain Multitudes, where the host considered is not our home but our body.