

The Culverts of Humboldt County

Hear, ye! Hear, ye! All ye of sensitive bent, I urge you to read no further. In fact, I command you to turn to Don Kardong's column so that you might avoid heart palpitations, skyrocketing blood pressure, and the urge to fire off a nasty letter of complaint.

What follows is a book review of one of the crudest—and funniest—novels I've ever had the pleasure to read. And another fair warning: it is not a running book, although it is written by a runner.

Timothy Martin has long been a friend of this magazine, one of its first—and best—scribblers. He won the RRCA award for best writer in a club newsletter several years ago and he is the author of *There's Nothing Funny About Running* and *Why Run If No One Is Chasing You?*

He once won the now-defunct Russian River Marathon but was never able to explain how he managed to do that.

He's a retired engineer (not the kind that gets to drive a locomotive) and has written a half-dozen screenplays, several of which are being considered by Hollywood producers.

But it seems that Tim had some time on his hands now that he's writing full-time since retiring from having a real job, and we all know that idle hands are the devil's workshop.

The book is *The Culverts of Humboldt County* (PublishAmerica, 2007) and any similarity to *The Bridges of Madison County* is purely intentional.

The little novel is both an indictment of and a celebration of wicked love (or more likely lust) among the redneck elements running around loose in far-northern California. You know the type: beer-drinkin', pickup-truck-tinkerin', gun-totin', mouth-breathin', cigarette-smokin', God-fearin', deodorant-averse, constantly sweatin', single-wide trailer-trash, CAT-hat-wearin', salt-of-the-earth maniacs. There is little good that I can say about the book other than it's one of the most hilarious novels I've ever read, and trust me on this, even in this kids-can't-read environment, over the years, I've read enough books to fill a two-story double-wide . . . if there is such a thing.

The book should come with one of those "sanitary toilet" paper belts they put around the john at the Motel 6, warning that "This Book Should Be Enjoyed Only by Terminally Politically Incorrect Cretins."

The plot is entirely simple(ton): Earl Perkins works for the California Department of Transportation inspecting and repairing roadway culverts. He leaves his wife, heads out on a job, runs into Charlene Bickle (a very unhappy wife stuck in a very unfulfilling marriage), and sparks begin to fly—and they ain’t from his Bic cigarette lighter. ’Nuff said. If you like Jeff Foxworthy and Larry the Cable Guy, this book makes them look like Rhodes scholars.

We anxiously await Tim’s next sociological tome, in which we anticipate that he will take on the far-northern California college professors and their 60-year-old leftover hippie students who have made a career out of going to school while living inside culverts next to their marijuana groves. Ya ever notice how “culverts” rhymes with “perverts”? Tim hasn’t either.

Get it. Read it. Put it into a plain brown envelope, and burn it before the kids or the police get hold of it. I normally am dead set against the burning of books, but I can see how I would have to make an exception in this case. —*Rich Benyo*