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BOOKS

Sometimes I Live in the Country

Review by Lois Wadsworth

Written by Frederick Busch,
published by David R. Godine,
1986.

Petey is a teenager with the blues. Uprooted from the big city he loved and plunked down in a hick town, he's mad. Separated suddenly and without explanation from his mom and now raised by his ex-cop dad, he's confused and unsure of himself. This kid flirts with some very serious ideas like suicide. He goes out at night on secret missions—sometimes just to sit alone in the darkness, but other times to fantasize killing himself, and a couple of times to play dangerous games.

Frederick Busch showed a knack for revealing the teenage boy residing within contemporary man in his delightful collection of stories, *Too Late American Boyhood Blues*, a couple of years back. For Petey, however, the question is not what kind of quirks he'll carry around as a man, but

whether he'll survive to manhood at all. I'm not convinced that Busch is as deft probing this delicate issue as in pursuing some of the lighter aspects of the American male's slow evolution to maturity, although he certainly knows how to get inside the thoughts of a desperate boy. In *Sometimes I Live in the Country*, Busch tries to peel back another layer of the masculine psyche and reveal the deeper sources of sub-cultural and psychological development. He flounders a bit with the material and doesn't wholly succeed, but he does illuminate a kind of teen despair that many adults seem to have forgotten.

Petey's dad works as the school cop, and both Petey and Pop fall in love with the school counselor, Liz Bean. Miz Bean's ability to awaken feelings in both of these guys helps them learn how to communicate with each other. She's a strong, central character in the story.

Another element of the story brings klansmen rednecks, under the leadership of a racist, fire-and-brimstone preacher, into inevitable conflict with Petey and Pop and a mysterious black man they follow home from the grocery store one day. In the end, everyone is involved in a shootout confrontation. The bigoted Reverend Staynes and the gentle, educated Mr. O'Nolan are both well-drawn, not-too-stereotypical characters.

But it is Petey whose problems lie at the core of *Sometimes I Live in the Country*, and Busch is in touch with the way a teenaged guy tries to sort out all the different things going on in his life. One afternoon, Petey stands up on the hill near the house, thinking:

"Petey . . . tried to think about himself. He couldn't feel anything important. He decided finally to think about Lugene. He couldn't remember her face. He remembered her breath. It smelled sweet because it smelled of bubble gum. She thought he was immature. He wasn't allowed to hang around town. He wasn't allowed to go to the roller skating place because his father said bums came there to sell the kids beer and marijuana and pills. He also said it didn't have enough exits and it was a firetrap. He wasn't allowed to see R-rated movies. He didn't have cool boots. He wore the trash felt-lined Canadian boots his father had bought him. He didn't have a hatchet so he could work on his trail and his bridge. He'd have to use the axe and he'd probably chop his toes off. 'The dumb die last,' his father had said. Well maybe."

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PUBLIC HEARING CITY OF EUGENE
NUCLEAR FREE ZONE ORDINANCE
April 30, 1987
Council Chamber/City Hall
7:30 p.m.

This is an opportunity to learn about Eugene's Nuclear Free Zone Ordinance and the review process it is undergoing at this time, and to voice your opinions about how that process should work.

On November 4, 1986, Eugene voters passed Ballot Measure 51, enacting the City of Eugene Nuclear Free Zone Ordinance. The City Council subsequently appointed the Nuclear Free Zone Task Force to review the ordinance and make recommendations to the Council. The Council's charge to the Task Force is as follows:

As soon as possible, the Nuclear Free Zone Task Force is to advise the City Council on four subjects:

- 1 Notification to public officials of the existence of the ordinance.
- 2 Placement of Nuclear Free Zone signs at City entrances.
- 3 Appropriate City response to questions about the legal problems raised by the ordinance; appropriate City response to administrative issues; the effects of the Nuclear Free Zone ordinance on the City's economic development and other programs.
- 4 Whether any changes suggested should be referred to the voters or acted on by the City Council.

The Task Force is to determine the details of its work plan, but will submit to the City Council an interim report and a final report and recommendation. A public hearing before the Task Force will precede each report.

The Task Force has begun its work, and would like to hear comments from Eugene citizens concerning the ordinance and/or the charge to the Task Force. If you feel that there are specific issues that the Task Force should consider in carrying out its charge, please attend this public hearing and express your opinions to the Task Force.

Information about the Nuclear Free Zone Ordinance and Task Force will be presented to participants at the beginning of the hearing. The hearing itself will continue until 9 p.m. From 9 until 9:30 p.m., Task Force members and staff will be available to discuss the Nuclear Free Zone informally with interested citizens.

Any citizen who would like to place written comments on the record of the Task Force should address them to: Nuclear Free Zone Task Force, City of Eugene, 777 Pearl St., Room 105A, Eugene, OR 97401. Individuals who would like more information about the ordinance or the Task Force, or who would like to be added to the Task Force mailing list, should call Glen Potter, John Porter, or Jody Miller at 687-5177.



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