

## BOOK REVIEWS

**One Summer:  
America, 1927**

Bill Bryson

I had no idea that 1927 was such an amazing year. Author Bill Bryson brings a marvelously entertaining narrative to his history book about the summer of 1927, and I found it difficult to stop reading.

Bryson sets the stage by telling us that there were few paved highways, that most travel and shipping was done by railroads. The US population was 120 million, with 50 percent living on farms (today, 15 percent of us live on farms). Prohibition was in its eighth year, and Chicago gangster Al Capone grossed over \$100 million.

Americans were not popular folks in Europe, and we were held in very low esteem in France, in particular. This was because America demanded that Europe repay with interest the \$10 billion it had loaned them during World War I. Europeans thought that this was outlandish seeing how all the money borrowed had been spent on American goods. Many Americans viewed this nonpayment as a betrayal of trust, which added fuel to the great numbers of Americans with an isolationist bent. America increased its already extremely high tariffs, creating a wall that was nearly impossible for European industries to climb over.

Here are just a few examples of what took place in the summer of 1927, arguably one of the most sensational times of the past century.

- The American workweek had dropped from 60 hours to 48 hours, and the Fourth of July fell on a Monday, giving American workers a rare and almost unheard of three-day weekend.
- In Bath Township, Michigan, Andrew Kehoe killed his wife, then blew up an elementary school, killing 37 children and 7 adults. His farm was about to be foreclosed on, and he blamed local school taxes for this. (Kehoe had been the treasurer of the local school board.) When rescuers were at the school, Kehoe blew up his truck, killing himself, the school superintendent, and a young boy who had survived the earlier bombing.
- A 32-year-old baseball player who suffered from low blood pressure, chronic indigestion, occasional shortness of breath, and an appetite for sex and food (in that order) that knew no bounds, and whose best days were long behind him, broke his own record, set in 1921, of 59 home runs. The mighty Babe Ruth was back in style, hitting 60 home runs, a record that wasn't broken until Roger Maris did it in 1961.



- Fellow Yankee Lou Gehrig gave Ruth a run toward that record. On July 4, Gehrig led Ruth 28 to 26 in home runs. Gehrig hit 14 homers in 21 games with three of those in one game against Boston. (Gehrig was named the American League's most valuable player even though he came up short against Ruth with 47 home runs.)
- Carmaker Henry Ford, who was the only American mentioned favorably in Adolf Hitler's 1925 memoir *Mein Kampf*, was being sued for libel by Aaron Sapiro over Ford's rants about Jews published in Ford's book, *The International Jew*, a greatly admired publication in Nazi Germany. Ford was also dealing with plummeting car sales. (In 1938, on his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday, Hitler awarded Ford the Grand Cross of the German Eagle.)
- A murder trial in New York received more news coverage than the sinking of the Titanic. Ruth Snyder and her traveling corset salesman lover, Judd Gray, were on trial for the slaying of Albert Snyder, Ruth Snyder's husband and the art editor of *Motor Boating* magazine. (In 1927, women were not allowed to sit on the jury of first-degree murder trials because they supposedly couldn't deal emotionally with the fact that a guilty verdict sent the convicted quickly to the electric chair.)
- The Mississippi River flooded in epic style, remaining in flood stage for 153 straight days. The Great Mississippi Flood covered 500 miles from southern Illinois to New Orleans. In some places, the Mississippi River was 150 miles wide.
- Charles Lindbergh flew his plane, the Spirit of St. Louis, nonstop from Long Island to Paris, a feat never accomplished

before. Previous attempts had claimed the lives of 11 men in the nine months prior to Lindbergh's historic flight, which made him the most famous person in the world. He was so famous that his home state of Minnesota considered renaming itself "Lindberghia." In the first four days after his flight, 250,000 stories about it appeared in American newspapers. (Side note: Henry Ford wasn't the only person to receive a medal from Hitler in 1938—Lindbergh also received the Grand Cross of the German Eagle.)

• A young cartoonist by the name of Walt Disney created an animated short feature called *Plane Crazy*. The star was a mouse named Oswald, who soon became known as Mickey Mouse.

I have touched on just some of the stories that Bryson has written about in this five-out-of-five-stars book. Bryson is the king of popular narrative, and he takes us on a magical roller coaster ride through 1927.

Get it. Read it. You'll love it!

J.D. Rogers • 541-846-7736

**Eve, A Journey  
of Discovery**

J.M. Bailey

If you grew up in southern Oregon, you have no doubt heard about the legend of Sasquatch, aka Bigfoot. You might even have a story or two of your own to tell about that one time you were in the woods, alone, semi-lost and you came across "something." It could have been the feeling you were being watched, or knowing for sure something was following you, or perhaps you even caught a glimpse of a shadowy figure that you just couldn't explain away. Having spent much of my life tromping around in the woods, often alone, I too have a few stories to tell, but nothing I experienced ever came close to what this book offers up.

If you love the idea of the elusive Sasquatch, you will thoroughly enjoy *Eve, A Journey of Discovery* by Applegate Valley author J.M. Bailey, the first book in a trilogy that includes *Iron Mountain Ridge*, *The Journey of Eve Continues*; and *Elusive, A Forever Journey*.

This story takes place in northern California where the main character, Anna, a Sasquatch enthusiast, decides to explore one more wilderness road before she heads home. As luck would have it, she gets stuck on a narrow mountain pass as night is falling. Anna decides to stay the night in her car rather than risk hiking out, which was a good idea given that the night brought with it a huge storm, making it impossible to leave.

With the sunrise, Anna finds herself completely stranded, lost without a way out, and face-to-face with her deepest obsession: Eve, a living, breathing, and enormous Sasquatch.

The story unfolds with Anna spending the next few days living with Eve and learning much about this wilderness creature—and herself—throughout each nail-biting twist and turn. This book will



surely keep you in suspense as the plot thickens when Anna is introduced to Eve's family. Many unimaginable dangers arise when a human being lives with these denizens of the deep woods.

J.M. Bailey makes this adventure seem believable, almost as if she herself has experienced something similar. Her detailed descriptions transport the reader alongside Anna as she struggles to stay alive and is torn between wanting to remain with these creatures or to return to her home and husband. The choice is taken away from her in the end, but you will have to read the book to find out what finally happens!

I found the book to be a quick read, an ideal escape for a few afternoons, and perfect for anyone interested in delving into the legend of Bigfoot. Enjoy!

Stephanie Allen-Hart  
estacia66@gmail.com

**POETRY CORNER*****We exist, it is said by the scientists,  
because stars explode***

by Barb Summerhawk

Starburst seeds we are;  
The universe stepped back, said  
Nova, baby, blow.  
Let's not hesitate  
We all can cross-pollinate  
New worlds we'll create  
Fill with souls that resonate.  
Hip hop over to my side of the Applegate Galaxy, where  
All of us, sown by the stars  
Sift down, crop up, stand out:  
We are seeds of hope  
Seeds of faith  
Seeds of fun  
Strewn across our landscapes here, now  
Born in a supernova, us—so  
Let's sparkle like the stardust we are;  
Shine on.

**Essay *Splitting words***

Blade sinks into thick wet fir, *thwack*. I reach for the maul and swing it down onto the axe head as if I do this every day. But actually, I came out to chop wood only because I got stuck writing. What better way to deflect writer's block than to get outside, get moving, and—best of all—definitely have something to show for it after a couple hours of effort.

Grabbing the hatchet, I lop off a bothersome branch. In that gesture I realize this is about wielding tools, not following rules.

Until now, I've been a timid axe-swinger, wannabe splitter, woodlot imposter trying to figure out the rules. Like an aspiring writer worried she's not doing it right, afraid of mistakes, anxious about the correct way to wield an axe (semicolon), place a wedge (dash), angle a hatchet (comma)—that person was not yet a real wood-splitter.

Stuck, again. I yank the axe from damp, knotty wood. Looking for a different way in, I flip the log. This time it splits cleanly. I drop the axe, glance at my tools, extend my metaphorical insight: As a teacher, I encourage students to gauge good writing by the impact of their rhetorical choices—effective

use of tools—rather than obsessive adherence to grammatical rules. To experiment, throw their weight into it, try stuff. Seeing wood-splitting that way transforms my woodlot experience. I am at play with logs and tools, not captive to fear of errors.

What was a chaotic woodpile, like a disorderly heap of ideas, gradually transforms into a next-winter-worthy composition. An introduction, then conclusion, of crisscrossed logs bolsters each end. Logs are arranged and rearranged, added and deleted. I tinker with organization, syntax. Occasionally the whole pile collapses, forcing me to start over. But eventually a recognizable genre emerges: stacked firewood.

I check agreement and parallelism, push in protruding ends, sweep up chips, and head back to my desk, ready to write again.

Margaret Perrow della Santina

541-899-9950

perrowm@sou.edu

*Margaret Perrow della Santina is associate professor of English and director of the Oregon Writing Project at Southern Oregon University.*