

ventions, unwinding in trendy bears, slipping into bed with luscious women..."

Sadly, there are far too many passages like that. Fortunately for his students (not to mention his readers) McCourt is more original in his classroom. Where other teachers see forged excuse notes as inevitability, he finds a writing exercise in their creative absurdity. Soon his tyros are scribbling excuses for Adam and Eve and Al Capone as well as studying language in cookbooks.

At its worst, *Teacher Man* is repetitive and gratingly sentimental. At its best, we learn how a teacher's work is a day at the improv. A thankless job, an important job and an enriching profession that won't make you rich. It never totally satisfied McCourt, but that's probably because he was always a writer playing a teacher, playing an Irishman in America. — *John Dicker*

IN LIVING COLOR

Huerfano: A Memoir of Life in the Counterculture by Roberta Price. University of Massachusetts Press, 2004. Hardcover, \$29.95. One of *Foreward Magazine's* top ten university press books of the year.

Roberta Price's first experience of hippie communal life was as a grad student in the summer of 1969, when she and her partner David traveled around Colorado and New Mexico on a SUNY Buffalo grant to study the communes of the Southwest. By the time they returned to Buffalo after a second visit that winter, they knew they were hooked. The following summer, they packed up their 1947 Chrysler coupe and headed to Libre, an intentional community in the Huerfano Valley in the Southern Colorado Rockies.

Price's memoir is beautifully written, with attention to the ordinary details of life on the land — from milking goats, chopping wood and baking grass donuts to the endless and impossible task of building their house around a boulder on the side of a mountain.

Price includes the less glamorous aspects of communal life, such as applying for food stamps. "Think of it as a kind of NEA grant

to fund this important experiment in living," David rationalizes. She gives realistic accounts of drug use and the trials and rewards of open marriage. Color and black and white photographs help to document the times, the place and the colorful cast of characters living at the valley's several communes.

Libre was a loosely-knit collection of well-educated couples (you had to be a couple to join), who shared resources and land but lived in separate houses, domes and zomes. In a postlogue, Price tells us what many of these exceptional people are doing today.

The journal covers a seven-year period, from 1970-77, with reference to current events and the music, books and icons of the counterculture. It is an intellectually satisfying history, as well as an entertaining romp. By chronicling her own journey with candor and insight, she helps explain why so many educated, middle-class kids dropped out of mainstream America in the 1960s and '70s, and why that time of "unbridled possibilities" came to an end. In Price's delightful and highly readable memoir, we get an authentic look at the era. — *Sonja Snyder*

TAKING THE LEAP

The Commitment — love, sex, marriage and my family by Dan Savage. Penguin Group, 2005. Hardcover, \$24.95.

After reading Dan Savage's weekly column "Savage Love" in *The Stranger* and laughing so hard my stomach hurt when I saw him speak in San Diego last fall, I had high expectations for *The Commitment*. Maybe too high.

I expected to laugh. And while the book has some laugh-out-loud moments, they were too few and too far between. Especially during the first half of the book, which slogs through a family vacation that's as interesting as wading through knee-deep quicksand.

If you're familiar with the debate surrounding gay marriage, *The Commitment* won't break any new ground, but it should be required reading for all those people who voted against it. Savage's family is so tradi-



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