

# What's topping many holiday book wish lists

I still can't believe it. But there it is, pictured in one of the dozens of holiday gift catalogs I've received this year. Among the ubiquitous perfumes, lingerie, satin coat hangers, snow domes, travel clocks, et al, it's certainly "the gift with a difference," you must admit. It appears fairly sturdy, looks to be about the size of a small breadbox, and it costs \$30.

But you can trust me on this: I do not want a bat house for Christmas. The bat should be "revered," my catalog admonishes. After all, it eats insects at a rate of 500 plus per hour. I still don't want a bat house for Christmas.

Actually, I'm not aware of anyone who does. (Maybe I know the wrong people?)

So what does any of this have to do with books? Nothing really, it's just my way of reminding you that, though they may not be exactly standing in line for bat houses this year, there are millions of people out there who do yearn for good books at holiday time.

THE FOLLOWING are topping many wish lists this season:

• "A Life on the Road by Charles Kuralt (G.P. Putnam's Sons \$19.95). The most poetic of newsmen writes

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— Victoria Diaz

of the nomadic existence he has lived and loved since hiring on at CBS for \$135 a week in 1957. Most of the book focuses behind-the-scenes on his Emmy-winning series, "On the Road."

"I always wondered where the roads went," Kuralt says, remembering his North Carolina boyhood. For him, they eventually went nearly everywhere. Via this book, readers get to go along for the ride. Black-and-white photos are included.

• "Laura Ingalls Wilder Country" by William Anderson. (Harper Perennial, \$19.95). This glossy paperback should be joy to all Wilder fans. The book is a kind of photo-

## book break Victoria Diaz

graphic record of the Midwestern author's life, with extensive text by Michigan historian William Anderson. Contemporary photos (by Leslie Kelly) are interspersed with pictures from the Ingalls-Wilder family collection. (Some Wilder devotees may be surprised to learn that the original manuscript of "The Long Winter," her sixth book, was presented to the Detroit Public Library in 1949 by Wilder herself, and is now housed in the Rare Book and Gift Room.)

• "The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity" edited by John McManners (Oxford University Press, \$39.95). What better time to give or get this particular book than at Christmas? Seven hundred pages of text and striking artwork focus on the 2,000 years of history since the birth of Christ, and chronicle ways in which Christianity has shaped that history.

• "Friday Night Lights" by H.G.

Bissinger (Addison-Wesley, \$19.95). Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Bissinger writes of the agony and ecstasy of high school football in Odessa, Tex. Playing for Odessa's Permian Panthers, who win state championships as if there were no tomorrows, a boy can be a worshipped town hero at 16 or 17. But what happens after high school for these kids? "Friday Night Lights" is not just a close look at one football program, though, but a comment on high school athletics and America's passion with sports in general.

• "Epicurean Delight" by Evan Jones (Knopf, \$24.95). Subtitled, "The Life and Times of James Beard," this should be a treat for biography fans, history buffs and cookbook lovers. Dozens of the famed gourmet's favorite recipes are included. Black-and-white photos are also part of the fun.

• "Looking for a Ship" by John McPhee (Straus and Giroux, \$17.95). A fascinating book for those of us who love to settle in with a good, seafaring tale on a winter's night. "Looking for a Ship" reads almost like fiction, but it's really the true story of essayist McPhee's own 42-day adventure aboard the Merchant Marine vessel, the SS Stella Lykes. Cruise out of Charlotte, S. C., through the Panama Canal and on to South America's Pacific Coast, and never get your feet wet. For armchair adventurers, it's a dream.

• "Passing On" by Penelope Lively (Grove Weidenfeld, \$17.95). Dorothy Glover, an unmarried mother if ever there was one, has passed on, leaving her three grown children with the remains of her body and spirit. This novel by British author Lively is not a ghost story in the traditional sense, though. Selected as a Notable Book for 1990 by the New York Times Book Review, it centers

more on the living spirit of Dorothy's offspring.

• "The Innocent" by Ian McEwan (Doubleday, \$18.95). This macabre thriller has been hailed as one of McEwan's finest. In the darkest days of the Cold War, a young British post office technician becomes involved in a clandestine project in war-torn Berlin (and also in a passionate affair with a rather mysterious woman). Much of the action is centered around an actual happening: the construction, by the British and Americans, of a secret underground tunnel,

which led to Soviet communication lines beneath the city.

• "A Relative Stranger" by Charles Baxter (Norton, \$17.95). Here is a baker's dozen of short stories set in Michigan and created by the critically acclaimed author of "Through the Safety Net" and "First Light." If you're looking for something perceptive, knowing and humorous about familial relationships, look no farther.

Victoria Diaz is a Livonia-based book reviewer.



## You meant to make reservations.

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## Dream comes true for Livonia artist

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offer to make a difference. I wanted to use my talents to address the public."

BESIDES THE work on display, Ferguson plans to do more paintings to call attention to social problems.

The Habitat Series, which the artist hopes to make available in posters, will include a painting called "April Showers."

The painting will illustrate his concern for the environment. It will include three scenes that show industrial pollution, acid rain and barren land, or the cause, effect and result of industrial waste.

Another work in progress is an acrylic painting depicting the slaughter of harp seals, a practice that Ferguson and his wife oppose by supporting animal rights and environmental groups.

FERGUSON'S STUDIO, a small, converted bedroom, is filled with sketches, current work and completed projects that may or may not

have commercial value.

Some of his ideas are inspired by newspaper photographs and magazine illustrations. And many of his favorites, which aren't for sale, decorate his art deco-style home.

Lining the staircase is an untitled portrait of an overweight, pear-shaped man deep in thought. Done in mixed media, the detail shows every vein and line in the man's aging body and each wrinkle in the subject's clothes.

The artist's favorite, called "The Ballroom Lady," is done in acrylic, pencil and ink. Again, the close attention to detail makes the portrait of the old lady smoking on the beach appear as sharp as a photograph.

Another favorite is titled, "The Yurping Over the Bermuda Triangle."

The acrylic, poster-sized painting, inspired during Ferguson's years at Sibley Shoes, shows a well-pollished pair of penny loafers on the feet of an up-and-coming yuppie. In the background are trendy jeans, jewelry and sport clothes, all included to show the excess in the '90s.

FERGUSON, WHO majored in mass communications at Wayne State University, has always been a doodler as a thinker who transfers his thoughts to a sketch pad or a canvas.

"I even watch commercials on television and think about how to illustrate them."

The father of two, Ferguson hopes his work focusing on social issues, such as violence and the environment, makes his young daughters aware early on of the problem facing the country.

For the artist, the transition from commercial art to the more abstract work on display at Detroit Artists Market is "like a writer switching from a textbook to a novel."

"I'm so grateful for my diversity. I just hope that people will see my message."

## 'Messiah' to be performed

Continued from Page 1

man, attending a performance of the Messiah, is as much of a part of his Christmas tradition as going to church. That is an enviable holiday tradition worth beginning.

"I can't imagine the Christmas season without Christmas music," Reed said.

Tickets for the third concert of the Plymouth Symphony Orchestra's

45th anniversary season are \$12 for adults, \$8 for students K-12.

The "Messiah plus" tickets are available in Plymouth at Evola Music Center, 215 Ann Arbor Road and Beltner Jewelry, 904 W. Ann Arbor Trail; in Northville at Bookstall on the Main, 116 E. Main, and Orin Jewelers, 101 E. Main; in Livonia at Hammell Music, 15530 Middlebelt; and at the auditorium box office, 68181 Joy, Canton Township, 30 minutes before the performance.

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