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# SPRING READING

Lolla Stewart

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Weston Bate

LUCKY CITY:

THE FIRST GENERATION AT BALLARAT, 1851–1901

MUP, \$55hb, 295pp, 0 522 84157 0

This highly readable and lavishly illustrated volume tells you almost everything you ever wanted to know about early Ballarat. More than that, it is a fascinating exploration of a society of adventurers, misfits, opportunists, reprobates and idealists: their interactions with each other, the authorities, the original inhabitants and the environment. The taming of this raw ‘skirmish’ into a Golden City, complete with high art and architecture, and represented in the first Australian parliament by none other than Alfred Deakin, is a story that Weston Bate — historian, prolific author and consultant to Sovereign Hill — tells with wit and breadth of vision. Equally generous with details of mining and local by-laws as with the reported earnings of prostitutes, facts about diet, dogs and the fate of lost children, this book is not all about glory and glitter. Ugly attitudes and ironies are noted. Bate asks challenging questions as well as drawing informed conclusions. Extensively referenced endnotes, appendices and three pages of bibliography will satisfy serious researchers, while the layperson will read this fine volume for the lively tale, as tantalising as the gold that started it all.

Julietta Jameson

CHRISTMAS ISLAND INDIAN OCEAN

ABC Books, \$24.95pb, 293pp, 0 7333 1195 4

Australian journalist Julietta Jameson, like many of us, watched the *Tampa* crisis with a mixture of confusion and compassion. Unlike us, upon hearing of the Christmas Islanders’ fireworks send-off for Captain Rinnan, she decided to visit this Australian outpost to see firsthand the place — previously famous only for its red crabs — that now found itself in the world’s spotlight. As well as natural tropical beauty, she found a multicultural community conscious of its diverse roots and history, replete with characters and local traditions. In a conversational style, she conveys her encounters with the locals from musicians to storekeepers to uncomfortable navy personnel. She examines the part each plays in her journey of discovery as she tries to reconcile the beauty of a night sky flashing with falling stars over the heads of detention centre inmates whose wishes may never be granted. It’s unfortunate that from time to time Jameson resorts to cliché in her descriptions of this unique time and place.

Christine Trimmingham Jack

GROWING GOOD CATHOLIC GIRLS:

EDUCATION AND CONVENT LIFE IN AUSTRALIA

MUP, \$34.95pb, 133pp, 0 522 85055 3

The rigid and simplistic John-and-Betty style illustration on the cover of this book encapsulates the era under scrutiny in this study of one convent school’s influence on the lives of Australian women. Kerever Park was a boarding school run by the Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in Burradoo in the southern highlands of NSW. Fourteen of its former students and staff relate memories of life inside its walls. Christine Trimmingham Jack, currently Head of Primary Education at the University of Canberra, draws upon philosophy, feminist histories and theology, educational theory and the discipline of social science to explore their stories. She provides insight into the far-reaching effects, both positive and negative, of this intense kind of religious educational experience. Declaring her own faith, and that of all her interviewees, the author offers informed balance to the narratives of disaffected former Catholics. Poor quality paper and a small font detract from the impact of this extensively referenced study.

Helen O’Neill

LIFE WITHOUT LIMITS:

THE REMARKABLE STORY OF DAVID PESCOD  
AND HIS FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL IN A SEA OF WORDS

Bantam, \$27.95pb, 261pp, 1 86325 373 4

David Pescud, founder of Sailors With DisAbilities — whose KAZ crew have just set a record for circumnavigation of Australia — has always been at home on the water. Dyslexia locked him out of the world of print at an early age. Family tragedy and humiliations at school left him an angry, disturbed youth until, finally diagnosed with a ‘legitimate’ disability at the age of seventeen, he began to see himself in a different way. He went on to achieve success in business and through his passion to bring the joys of sailing to disabled adventurers. His SWD team, which included a blind man, an amputee and a twelve-year-old dyslexic boy, survived the nightmarish 1998 Sydney to Hobart Race, coming in ninth overall and winning their category. Award-winning journalist Helen O’Neill, noting the irony of writing the story that her subject will never read, captures Pescud’s honest, humorous and colourful voice, passionate and caring personality, and his inspiring spirit of adventure. This story will change how you see print, as well as how you see disability.

Shane Gould  
TUMBLE TURNS

HarperSports, \$21.95pb, 319pp, 0 7322 7767 1

Originally published in 1999, this edition of Gould's autobiography captures the 'tumble turns' that the swimming icon has performed in the most recent years of her life. Her involvement in the Sydney 2000 Games, her return to the water, her enterprises and activities to promote clean sport and a healthy life are touched on in the added chapters. Giving credit to people as diverse as Edward de Bono, Anthony Robbins, her local pastor, her ex-husband, as well as her children and her current partner, Gould reveals her erudition as well as her generous and questing spirit. The continuing story throws new light on her journey through the competitive worlds of international swimming, youthful superstardom, voluntary poverty and spirituality. Gould wanted to be 'normal'; her remarkable life reveals she is anything but.

Len Johnson

LOVE LETTERS FROM A WAR:  
THE LETTERS OF CORPORAL JOHN LESLIE  
JOHNSON AND HIS FAMILY, JUNE 1940–MAY 1941

ABC Books, \$32.95pb, 282pp, 0 7333 1255 1

When John Leslie Johnson, an unemployed rural carpenter, enlisted with the AIF in 1940, he was thirty-eight years old and the father of seven. After years of economic privation, he still nursed a dream of acquiring land for his family, so he decided to go to war: the army income would put shoes on his children's feet and, he dared to hope, ultimately enable him to own a farm. His dream died during the Tobruk counter-attack against Rommel on 17 May 1941. His son, Lesley Johnson, a former career military man, has combined historical research with extracts from documents and interviews to support this moving story of one Australian family's experience of love and death in World War II. Now the basis of an ABC docudrama, the letters that John's widow kept in a flour bag make real the minutiae of family life, its joys, hopes and sorrow played out on history's stage. Ample photographs add to the personal poignancy; a wealth of military detail anchors the story in uncompromising fact.

Bruce Elder

REMEMBER WHEN:  
REFLECTIONS ON A CHANGING AUSTRALIA

Lothian, \$29.95pb, 209pp, 0 7344 0538 3

Prolific author and journalist, Bruce Elder ruminates on what has been gained and lost in the Australia of his lifetime. Whatever happened to the milk bar, the hamburger with the lot, chooks outside the flywire door and billycart derbies? Our national character, the content of radio shows, diet, mateship, greed, Americanisation, and the growing underclass all come under Elder's scrutiny. His juxtaposition of personal anecdote, historical overview and cutting commentary make this both entertaining and challenging reading. Drawing on his

knowledge of subjects as diverse as economics, strawberry-growing, politics, media control and Sydney's prostration before the 'A' list, he presents wide-ranging reflections, and asks questions about Australia's sense of itself in the new millennium. The omission of a bibliography hinders interested readers from pursuing Elder's arguments further.

Clare Brown

DRIVEN BY IDEAS: THE STORY OF ARTHUR BISHOP,  
A GREAT AUSTRALIAN INVENTOR

UNSW Press, \$45hb, 263pp, 0 86840 677 5

Arthur Bishop, now eighty-six, is hardly a household name, and 'variable ratio gearing' is not a hot conversation topic, yet those of us with power steering in our cars owe much to this man. The ease and safety we take for granted when driving began as an idea in Bishop's brilliant mind. This is the story of an invention as much as it is of an inventor. Prepared to invest millions in his ideas, Bishop has registered more than eighty patents worldwide for vehicle and aircraft steering, and is still contributing to the debate over SUV stability problems and the potential of automated people movers. He has earned his place as one of Australia's greatest engineers. Clare Brown's interviewing skills and exhaustive research reveal a story of unshakeable belief in the beauty of a concept, persistence in the face of interminable obstacles, and family sacrifice and loyalty. Engineers will appreciate the diagrams and textual detail. A glossary of key terms demystifies many of the mechanical concepts.