

From the Stacks
By Julie Orf
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People choose to read non-fiction books most often to understand the world more clearly. Non-fiction offers real stories, practical knowledge, and insights that can guide everyday life. Whether readers are curious about history, hungry for self-improvement, eager to learn new skills, or simply fascinated by true events and remarkable people, non-fiction provides a direct connection to reality. This reading provides a tangible return on investment not just entertainment, but the potential for personal growth, informed decision-making, and becoming a more educated and aware participant in society.

Anthony Hopkins' memoir, *We Did OK, Kid*, recounts his journey from the son of a baker, who was a rebellious student and hated his Welsh boarding school to a globally celebrated actor. The book details his early career progression from getting his first line onstage at the YMCA, studying at Cardiff College of Music and Drama and the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, his struggles with alcoholism, his time working under Laurence Olivier at the National Theatre, and his first film role in "The Lion in Winter" (encouraged by Peter O'Toole). The latter half focuses on his celebrated cinema career, including his Best Actor Oscar-winning roles in *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991) and *The Father* (2020). Hopkins is an engaging narrator, offering humor such as when he first heard of "The Silence of the Lambs" and asked his agent if it was a children's film.

Marked by humility and deep gratitude, Lionel Richie's writing is refreshingly open, never bragging, and he still expresses awe when describing celebrity friends like Stevie Wonder. His memoir, *Truly*, is fun, self-deprecating and a love letter to music and his hometown of Tuskegee. Richie recounts his childhood as a "horribly shy" boy struggling with anxiety and undiagnosed ADHD. While at the Tuskegee Institute, he joined the Commodores, achieving rapid fame with hits like "Easy" and "Three Times a Lady." In 1982, he launched a solo career, cementing his global icon status. This pop star and American Idol judge attempts to answer how his massive success, epitomized by his 2015 Glastonbury Festival performance for 175,000 fans, even happened.

Susan Orlean's *Joyride* is an engaging look at her life and writing career, emphasizing her boundless curiosity and sense of wonder. Her work spans the ordinary and the extraordinary, from her iconic profile of a ten-year-old boy, "The American Man Age Ten", and a piece on the routine magic of Saturday night, to reporting on a woman who owns twenty-seven tigers and climbing Mt. Fuji. This book serves as an indispensable and practical guide for embracing a creative path. Orlean openly details the writing

process: dreaming up ideas, managing deadlines, connecting with sources, chasing leads, confronting self-doubt and writer's block, and her specialty, crafting the perfect lede.

Nancy "Pippa" Latour, who modestly described her life as "unusual," was the last surviving undercover female British agent of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) in World War II. Working in occupied France as a radio operator, she transmitted German troop details and Resistance instructions to London. Adopting the cover of a goat's milk soap seller, she navigated France by bicycle, successfully evading detection by fitting in: "Our job was to disappear... and not be noticed." Though often scared, her luck held through several Gestapo interrogations. Traumatized and exhausted, she settled in New Zealand after the war, keeping her secret even from her husband until her son discovered her wartime past online. Before her death at 102 in 2023, Latour, with the help of journalist Jude Dobson, recounted her fascinating and humble story in a memoir entitled, *The Last Secret Agent*, which also highlights the experiences of other female agents.