

Sunday Brunch

SECTION

B

BEST OF ALL WORLDS

Ehrman combines nursing, missionary volunteering into rewarding life

By Carol Ferguson
Herald-Banner Staff

In addition to being a wife, a mother of five home-schooled children, and a missionary volunteer, Lori Ehrman is also a surgical nurse at Hunt Regional Medical Center

The thread that knits all of these roles together is love, she points out.

Ehrman was born and reared in Long Island, N.Y. "I grew up poor, but didn't know it — everything was good. We lived in a little house, a bungalow, on the water, and it was not until junior high school that I knew we were poor. There were the differences in clothing and in the cars that were dropping kids off at school. I hadn't ever seen a Mercedes before," she added laughing.

"The benefit was I was good in school — they couldn't teach me fast enough — and some place along the line I realized that education was the key to where I was going to go in life."

Raised a Catholic, she had a great devotion to St. Bernadette of Lourdes and at one time even considered becoming a nun.

"But once the world opened up, I lost my religious vocation," she said. "I went to church, but the world around me was just so loud, and it's hard to find that 'quiet' space."

Ehrman attended New York University on a scholarship, majoring in French language and international politics with a goal of becoming an attorney for the United Nations. NYU had a study-abroad program, and during her junior year she attended classes at the



CAROL FERGUSON / HERALD-BANNER

Hunt Regional Medical Center in Greenville plays a big part in the lives of the women in Lori Ehrman's family. From left are Anna, Erin, Nora and their mother, Lori. Three are already hospital employees, and the youngest, Anna, hopes to work there in the future.

Sorbonne, which is one of the campus schools of the University of Paris.

Paris, the city of romance, was also where she met her future husband, Scott, who was a Marine guarding the U.S. consulate there. When they decided to marry, they settled on Texas as their future home.

Ehrman had never been to Texas, but Scott, whose father's work had taken him to a number of U.S. states, had once lived here.

"He told me, 'In Texas, opportunity abounds,' and so we moved here in February 1991," she said.

She smilingly describes her husband as "a force to be reckoned with. He's the perpetual Boy Scout with all those good Boy Scout qualities — 'Do the right thing!'"

"He became a Garland police officer, and I started working for EDS in Plano in the legal department, although I was still bent on law school," she said. "Then the children came

along and changed the plan.

"I was faith-challenged here, which was a good thing for me — it got me into studying the teachings of the church."

The couple's work schedules were beginning to tell on them, however. "I'd get to work about 6 a.m. and drive home at 2 p.m.," she said. "Then he would leave at 2:40 p.m. and work till 11 p.m. We did this for about a year, and I used to cry all the while driving to work and back home from work. I wanted to be with my kids."

Deciding that they were short-changing their children, Ehrman quit her job, saying they would economize ... "I can thrift-shop anything."

"We moved to an old house that my in-laws had in Garland ... got chickens, learned to butcher meat, make our own cheese and yogurt. This was definitely not Long Island. We 'did Texas,' or what I thought Texas was supposed to be."

She also began what she

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Annual chance to snoop at what other 'bookworms' are reading

It's that time of year again.

As a confirmed book-a-holic, I'm always curious about others' choices, and this annual 'who's reading what' column gives me a chance to snoop. I've contacted a dozen or so friends who've passed on their recommendations, so you book-lovers take note.

Here we go:

• **Dr. James Nicholson**, Greenville physician: "I have two I've read recently. One is 'The Orphan Master's Son' by Adam Johnson, about the dictatorship in North Korea. It's the scariest book I've read in a long time — it shows the Orwellian direction so many nations are going at the moment. A page turner. The other was called 'Shadow of the Sun' written by a Polish journalist, Ryszard Kapuscinski. He spent most of his life going around Africa traveling on buses, and he had a fascinating relationship with Africa. He likes the people, and he paints a picture which may help us understand the turmoil in Africa. He shows in detail how, just by the stroke of a pen by the Europeans, we came in after World War I and divided a totally tribal continent into artificial straight lines and boundaries. It ripped their social structure completely asunder and put together some tribes that had hated each other for thousands of years and separated some that had loved each other."

• **Sandy Rapp**, Greenville: "'The Owl



CAROL FERGUSON
On Second Thought

Who Liked 'Sitting on Caesar' is a delightful kind of off-the-wall book by Martin Windrow, an author of British military history. He was recuperating from a skydiving accident, and his brother, an expert in falconry, gave him a little owl for company. Windrow named him Wellington, but he was less of a companion and more of a bother, and soon after escaped, never to be seen again. However Windrow was intrigued and acquired a tawney owl, named her Mumbles, and thus ensued a 15-year relationship that is hysterically funny, endearing and a breath of fresh air from formula writing. The book's title comes from the fact that the owl sat on a bust of Caesar's head. I also read 'The Monogram Murders,' a new Hercule Poirot mystery written by Sophie Hannah. She has captured Agatha — the book is every bit Christie and a bit more. The author has not missed a beat capturing the Belgie."

• **Bob Trad**, Greenville pharmacist: "Three of the books I read are 'Freedom's Forge' by Arthur Herman, how American business built the arsenal of democracy that won WWII; 'To End All Wars — Loyalty and

Rebellion 1914-1918' by Adam Hochschild; and 'Whiteout' by Ken Follett, a novel of industrial espionage in Scotland."

• **Mary Jane Vance**, Greenville author: "I am currently reading through 'Looking Back ... Moving Forward,' the Silver Leos anthology to which I am a contributor. This book was a promise kept to (the late professor) Dr. Fred A. Tarpley and contains fiction, poetry, drama and non-fiction showcasing the writings of the Silver Leos Writers Guild. Another book not to miss is 'A Deceit To Die For' by Luke Montgomery, a pseudonym. This fast-moving, in-depth book is about some of the author's adventures in Turkey and its surroundings and kept me fascinated with its many layers of intrigue and the author's knowledge of his subject."

• **Joe C. Johnson**, Caddo Mills: "I received several books from my children for Christmas. I enjoy what I call 'easy reads at times' — you can read, put them down, then later come back and start another chapter without being lost in the process. 'Texas Ranch Women' by Carmen Goldthwait and 'Texas Siftings' by the late Jerry Flemmons were very enjoyable. Am now just getting around to 'The Time It Never Rained' by Elmer Kelton. 'Lone Survivor: The Eyewitness Account of Operation Redwing and the Lost Heroes of SEAL Team 10' by Marcus Luttrell, 'Taking Charge' by Michael R. Beschloss (which is about LBJ's

White House tapes 1963-1964), and Bill O'Reilly's 'Killing Patton' are the three I have scheduled when the mood strikes me for more serious reading."

• **Anne Haynes**, Greenville business woman, says she has been reading several books at one time, depending on her mood. "'Pegasus' by Danielle Steel is my trashy novel. It's the story of a family in Germany at the beginning of World War II when Hitler was making his declaration about sending Jews to concentration camps. This son learns that his mother was part Jewish, and so the father and his two sons have to get out of Germany. This is their saga. The other book is 'Sugar in the Blood: A Family's Story of Slavery and Empire,' by Andrea Stuart. It's a true story about slavery in the Caribbean Islands, a family that is in Barbados with the sugar cane plantations. They came over to Barbados as slaves, and they progressed over generations — changed their perspective of who they were. It's interesting because this is a black family that can trace its roots back to the 1400s, before Columbus discovered America."

• **Caleb Slinkard**, Herald-Banner editor, read "Speaker For The Dead" by Orson Scott Card. "In this follow-up to the more popular 'Ender's Game,' Card expands his science fiction universe to immense proportions. A fascinating, if sometimes horrifying, examination of how people interact with

those whom they perceive as different. I also read 'Batman Eternal: Vol. 1' by various artists. The first collection of the 'Batman: Eternal' weekly comic book series was a great way to jump-start the series, with plenty of appearances by classic Batman villains and allies. This trade paperback version is a much easier way to read the series, as opposed to weekly installments."

• **Judy Woods**, Greenville: "I recently read a book I picked up at the last Friends of the Library sale. 'Island of Saints' by Andy Andrews is about a part of World War II history I didn't know. In digging up a dead tree in the garden of his island home off the Gulf Coast, the author finds German artifacts. His attempts to trace their origins lead to the discovery that German U-boats not only lurked in the Gulf of Mexico, but sank large numbers of cargo ships during the war. Apparently some of the German sailors came

ashore (hence the artifacts) to shop and go to the movies. This novel-based-on-fact was an easy, interesting read. I've just finished 'When Will There Be Good News?' by Kate Atkinson. It's the first book I've read by this author and I'm not sure I'll read another. While the writing was superb and the characters engaging, such horrific things happen. I don't really enjoy such dark plots."

• **Christi Mock**, Greenville: "Recently I have been reading crime novels by J.D. Robb, also known as Nora Roberts. They are a combination of gritty detective, romance and science fiction. The setting is about 50 years in the future with things we have now or nearly have, enhanced — such as talking computers and cars that can drive themselves. It's fun, but believable."

• **Sammy Thomason**, Cash/Van Alstyne area: "There were so many good books that to nar-

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SUNDAY BRUNCH

Ehrman finds her calling with career in nursing as 'extension with love'

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calls her journey of home-schooling her children. Asked about the challenge of teaching five at one time, she said, "We did home-schooling around a table, with each child learning at their own level and pace, even using the same subject matter. When I taught history, for example, I didn't change the information for each child; they got a different 'picture' based on their maturity level."

By February of 2001, the family had moved to Farmersville. When the 9/11 terrorist attack came, "My husband called me at home and said 'Get on the TV.'"

Having come from New York, the couple found the emotional impact of the news pictures in that city particularly moving.

"Scott had just retired from the Marine Corps, but he said 'I have to do something,' and on the way home he stopped at the Texas National Guard and enlisted in the Army.

"The first time he was deployed was within the country — to Oregon for a year guarding some sensitive site. Then he was home

for 11 months, and in 2004 he was deployed to Afghanistan."

In 2005, Ehrman was walking on her treadmill and watching TV when she saw a program on EWTN network asking for persons to come to Lourdes, France, to do volunteer service for a few weeks at the shrine of the Virgin Mary. (Those unfamiliar with the story of Lourdes may remember the Twentieth Century-Fox film telling the story of the French peasant girl, Bernadette Soubirous, who in 1858 is believed to have seen 18 visions of the Virgin Mary, whom she described only as "the beautiful lady," in a grotto at Lourdes. Today approximately five million pilgrims and tourists visit the shrine each year.)

"The only qualifications for volunteers were that you be 'human and of good will,'" she said. The next time her husband was able to phone her, she told him of her interest in volunteering. He was very supportive, and said "When I get home, you can go."

After his return to the states

and to his job with the Garland PD, Ehrman made her first trip to Lourdes in October 2005. People come to Lourdes for healing — psychologically, emotionally, spiritually and/or physically, she said. They speak many languages, "...but you can convey a lot to them with a smile," added Ehrman who can also communicate well in French, Italian and Spanish.

"I'm a housewife, and there I'm seeing debilitating physical conditions and I have no idea what they are. I wanted to know more and help, but I lacked medical knowledge."

When she returned home she did research into the availability of local medical training, and enrolled in Collin College in McKinney

"By the third week of school, I was learning exactly what I did at Lourdes — working with people at a hospital."

Ehrman had discovered her calling.

"Nursing seems like a natural extension of being a wife and a mother — it's an extension with

love," she said.

"The two years of nurses' training are very rigorous, kind of like boot camp. The second year I got hired at Hunt Regional Medical Center as a nurse 'extern' — someone who has finished the first year of training and will get an RN degree next year. They pair you with a nurse who trains you how to be a nurse on a hospital floor. You work in all departments in the hospital — ER, ICU, telemetry, surgical, medical, wound care."

She looks on her nursing career as a kind of mission — whether it be in Greenville as an RN on the hospital's fourth-floor or in caring for pilgrims at Lourdes. She returns to France for three weeks of volunteer nursing each summer, and this year will be her 11th visit.

The children have also volunteered, and she has brought all of them along in pairs except her youngest son. "I'm very thrifty and I save every penny for air fare," she said.

During her few weeks away from home, both her husband

and her mother, who lives with them, keep an eye on the family's needs.

Their children, who now range in age from 24 to 14, include Nora who also works at the hospital as a personal care assistant; Eric who is a plumber ("What a blessing beyond compare, having a plumber in the family," she jokes); Erin who currently works at the hospital in food service and plans to go into nursing; Anna, whose goal is to be a triple-threat paramedic/firefighter/police officer/ all in one; and Carlton, now a Life Scout with plans to eventually join his brother in the plumbing business.

The entire family has a strong service ethic, whether it be in police work, the military, Scouting, nursing or volunteer work.

"Lourdes has transformed our family," she said. "Not just one month a year — every day we see the world and our community as a place that needs to be helped, and we actively attempt to help."

Choices of local 'bookworms' cover entire spectrum of available reading

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row them to a few is not easy, but one does stand out from the rest — C.J. Box's 'Open Season.' Box is a great storyteller. It's about Joe Pickett, a game warden in Wyoming, and the story flows so well it's hard to put down. Others are 'Gray Mountain' by John Grisham and 'Wild' by Cheryl Strayed." (Now a movie starring Reese Witherspoon.)

• **Sherry Thomason**, Sammy's wife, read these titles: "Zero Day" by David Baldacci, one of a series with new character, John Puller, an investigator for the U.S. Army's Criminal Investigation Division. Puller is very similar to Lee Child's Jack Reacher character. 'Suspect' by Robert Craise is the story of an LAPD cop and a dog who both

suffer from PTSD. It includes a lot of detail about the training of dogs and their loyalty.

'Leaving Time' by Jodi Picoult is a very surprising book. Daughter Jena is looking for her mom who disappeared 10 years before. Her mom and dad had run an elephant sanctuary, and her mom investigated how elephants experience grief. The book details the extraordinary behavior of elephants and the people who are working to protect them."

• **Joseph Hamrick**, Commerce/Herald-Banner reporter: "Since I heard of the death of one of my favorite authors, Tom Clancy, I decided to delve into the world of Jack Ryan and John Clark. I began with 'Without Remorse,' which

is a classic revenge novel, and am reading through the Ryan series currently. There are a lot of mature subjects covered in the books that didn't make their way into the movies, so be prepared for a lot of intense moments. On the non-fiction side, I am reading the book 'Prayer' by Timothy Keller. I really enjoyed his other books such as 'The Prodigal Son' and 'The Reason for God,' and so far 'Prayer' is very enjoyable."

• **Beverly Adkisson**, Greenville: "My latest favorite read is a trilogy of books written by Jennifer Worth. The first in the series is 'Call the Midwife: A True Story of the East End of London in the 1950s.' Jennifer is a district nurse and midwife attached to

a convent in Whitechapel. The stories are split between chapters describing individual mothers and their often-traumatic deliveries along with more lighthearted incidents back at the convent. All fascinating. These books absolutely cannot be put down. Dramatizations of the 'Call the Midwife' series will be on KERA, Channel 13, soon with different and also true stories."

• As for me, having lived in the San Francisco Bay Area for about five years, I've been eager to read Simon Winchester's "A Crack in the Edge of the World," a non-fiction account of the 1906 earthquake. My husband and I experienced several mild quakes, but nothing even approaching

the violence that hit the city and surrounding territory more than 100 years ago. And what that quake didn't topple, the following three days of fire destroyed. Winchester devotes the first half of his book to a look at the history of the city as well as a description of how the movement of plates in the earth along a fault line can wreak havoc. The second half includes accounts of the people who lived through it.

That's it for this year. I hope these suggestions have given you some ideas for future reads. The books certainly cover the spectrum, so enjoy, enjoy.

Ferguson is a columnist for the Herald-Banner.

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