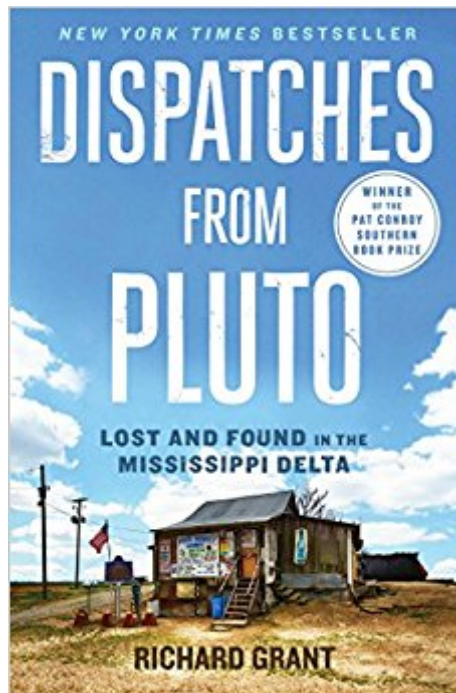




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Dispatches From Pluto: Lost And Found In The Mississippi Delta



Synopsis

Winner of the Pat Conroy Southern Book Prize Mississippi's #1 Bestseller of 2015 and 2016 (The Clarion-Ledger) A New York Times Bestseller In *Dispatches from Pluto*, adventure writer Richard Grant takes on "the most American place on Earth" – the enigmatic, beautiful, often derided Mississippi Delta. Richard Grant and his girlfriend were living in a shoebox apartment in New York City when they decided on a whim to buy an old plantation house in the Mississippi Delta. *Dispatches from Pluto* is their journey of discovery into this strange and wonderful American place. Imagine *A Year In Provence* with alligators and assassins, or *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* with hunting scenes and swamp-to-table dining. On a remote, isolated strip of land, three miles beyond the tiny community of Pluto, Richard and his girlfriend, Mariah, embark on a new life. They learn to hunt, grow their own food, and fend off alligators, snakes, and varmints galore. They befriend an array of unforgettable local characters – blues legend T-Model Ford, cookbook maven Martha Foose, catfish farmers, eccentric millionaires, and the actor Morgan Freeman. Grant brings an adept, empathetic eye to the fascinating people he meets, capturing the rich, extraordinary culture of the Delta, while tracking its utterly bizarre and criminal extremes. Reporting from all angles as only an outsider can, Grant also delves deeply into the Delta's lingering racial tensions. He finds that de facto segregation continues. Yet even as he observes major structural problems, he encounters many close, loving, and interdependent relationships between black and white families – and good reasons for hope. *Dispatches from Pluto* is a book as unique as the Delta itself. It's lively, entertaining, and funny, containing a travel writer's flair for in-depth reporting alongside insightful reflections on poverty, community, and race. It's also a love story, as the nomadic Grant learns to settle down. He falls not just for his girlfriend but for the beguiling place they now call home. Mississippi, Grant concludes, is the best-kept secret in America.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"The truest book about the Mississippi Delta since *Rising Tide*. Tony Horwitz, author of *Confederates in the Attic* [Grant] succeeds, and with flair. His empathic manner, reportorial talent and eye for the unexpected detail make this a chigger-bitten trip that entertains as much as it informs. The New York Times Book Review "Grant takes a fillet knife and lays us open to the bone, like you might a catfish. He exposes our idiosyncratic insanity and brilliance, both the failure and the promise that are driven by an intimate yet remote love/hate relationship along the racial divide. It's sad and beautiful at the same time."

Mississippi State Senator John Horhn "Readers with an appetite for a deep-fried version of *A Year in Provence* will find much to sate them here. [Grant is] like a deeper and way funkier version of Peter Mayle. It's the individual voices and anecdotes he records that give *Dispatches from Pluto* its dissonant lilt and outré charm."

Jonathan Miles, *Garden & Gun* "One of the best books to have been written about this part of Mississippi. Richard Grant has done something completely different from previous forays into this fascinating and frequently vilified part of America. Grant's book strikes a good balance between being partly *A Year in Provence*, Mississippi-style, and partly a searching investigation of the local culture. This is a man who has done his homework, asked hard questions, and made a point of getting to know everybody, white and black alike."

The New Criterion "This book's great virtue is how it sets aside assumptions to look with clear, questioning eyes. Mississippi's landscape, with its decreed little town(s) and primordial interruptions in the empire of modern agriculture, is refreshed by Grant's lovely prose."

Jackson Clarion-Ledger "Part travelogue, part sociological study, part memoir, and part nonfiction heir to the works of William Faulkner and Tennessee Williams, *Dispatches from Pluto* is provocative in the best kind of way. Grant approaches his subjects with empathy, yet pulls no punches. The result is an honest, engaging account of life in one of America's most beguiling, bewildering cultural outposts. This book is a revelation."

Alan Huffman, author of *Mississippi in Africa* "An appealing stew of fecklessness and curiosity, social psychology

and social dysfunction, hope and despair." **Kirkus Reviews** "[A] delightful inside look at life on today's Mississippi Delta." **Frans De Waal**, one of his "6 favorite books" in *The Week* "Grant writes with an admiration and tenderness for his new home and neighbors. The book is often riotously funny, particularly when describing real-life crime stories in Greenwood and elsewhere. But Grant is also thoughtful and earnest in trying to understand race relations in modern-day Mississippi | Grant is insights as an outsider trying to decipher a new world make this book compelling and also challenging. He is confronting tough truths and asking hard questions, but from a place of genuine respect and love." **Mississippi Business Journal** "Whether he is writing about how to shoot a buck or how to heat a house, Grant is funny, funny, funny. He is even funny at funerals, yet through all the escapades and hilarity, he never loses sight of the problem of Delta race relations. As much as anything else, this is a book about racism in America, and Grant confronts the issue with an outsider's honesty and aplomb." **Amy Wilentz**, author of *Farewell, Fred Voodoo* "A lovely, appreciative and entertaining tour of the strange and rich Mississippi Delta." **Shelf Awareness** "A fascinating blend of memoir and travelogue | a vivid and captivating portrait of the modern American South." **Largehearted Boy** "Think what *Midnight In the Garden of Good and Evil* could have been like if the author had a sympathetic understanding of the people. Richard Grant's Plutonic approach to the Delta turns up some marvelous surprises here." **Madison Smartt Bell**, author of *All Souls' Rising* "In the best tradition of Mark Twain's *The Innocents Abroad*, British travel writer Richard Grant explores the otherworldly Mississippi Delta by settling into an aging plantation home and letting himself be captured by an eccentric, racially-tortured and wondrously hospitable culture. Dispatches from Pluto is wise, wry, sympathetic and spot-on." **Curtis Wilkie**, author of *The Fall of the House of Zeus* "I've never read anything like this before, so I explain out revealing of humanity's true nature • how we have tangled ourselves up into the goofball messy life we've made on earth (let alone Pluto) while still having a moment or two where we are incredibly kind and sensible." **Carolyn Chute**, author of *The Beans of Egypt, Maine and Treat Us Like Dogs and We Will Become Wolves* "Richard Grant gets it. Many authors that write about the Delta may come and stay a few months, then go back to their comfortable hometowns to burn or scathe the Delta's mores, customs and culture. Richard bought an old plantation house here to become a part of the Delta and he writes about it in a way that brings laughter, astonishment, complexity and

perplexity. • Hank Burdine, Delta Magazine “Richard Grant is the ultimate cool customer, a fearless and skilled writer navigating the backwaters of rural Mississippi with his humanity on his sleeve, trying to get to the heart of what makes the Delta such a unique and soulful place while recounting a harrowing and funny, wise and heartwarming personal journey from nomad to proud homeowner. This is a great book.” • Mark Haskell Smith, author of Naked at Lunch

Richard Grant is an award-winning author, journalist, and television host. His books include Crazy River, the adventure classic God’s Middle Finger, and American Nomads, which has since been made into a BBC documentary of the same name.

Richard Grant wrote a story based on facts of life in the South that could only be known by living in the Delta. After years of oppression the black people are often expected to "shake it off" and be thankful for their civil rights. At the same time we see racism is not just white toward black; but, we see it manifested in black toward White and Mexican, the same as the Mexican and Whites. I believe racism has been seen in most areas of our country as different nationalities learn to live together. Mr Grant pointed out the need for people to help themselves. To gain respect and acceptance one must take care of their own business. All of this was told in a story of two people moving from NYC to the Delta and learning to live together in a foreign culture. Great book.

Very entertaining. The author (British) was thorough in getting a balanced view of life in the Mississippi delta area. Rich, poor, black, white, redneck, far left, etc. It was refreshing to find that there was not one pre-targeted villain responsible for the delta’s ills and there are many ills; nor was there one pat solution offered up. In other words, the author came at this with an open mind and found, possibly to his surprise, that both the issues and potential solutions are complex. There is no doubt that this area of the south is more than a bit idiosyncratic; in its topography, its relative isolation and its richness in eccentric characters. The author took time to get close to the action to capture all of these in meticulous fashion making Dispatches from Pluto a very interesting read.

As a young graduate with an accounting degree from Mississippi State University, I passed up offers from Big Four accounting firms, and accepted an offer from a local firm located in Greenwood, Mississippi, married a girl who had grown up there, and quickly learned that I would be forever

known as Judith (last name withheld)'s husband. After four years, I could feel the economic decline starting to take its toll on the Delta way of life, and I moved my wife and infant son to another state. Richard Grant's depiction of the Delta, its people, its problems, and its enigmatic charm brought back vivid memories of my time spent there. Through his excellent narrative I relived the visits to Lusco's for a side of "bull yearling," fishing on the bayous, and parties in the Delta tradition of opulence. But I also relived the racial tension that existed, and was reminded of the struggle of the aristocratic gentry to hang onto a way of life that was slipping away from them, while the majority struggled to simply live. *Dispatches from Pluto* is interesting, it is well-written, often humorous, and I found it surprisingly entertaining.

I am a native Alabamian who has lived all over the world, including three years in the author's native England. I attended college at Mississippi University for Women (MUW) in Columbus and reviewed non-fiction and fiction for the Mobile (AL) Press Register for eight years. I'm also a former columnist for Stars and Stripes in Europe. I believe this background makes me uniquely qualified to review this book. "*Dispatches from Pluto*" is one of the smartest and most insightful books I have ever read. Sometimes it is laugh out loud funny, but the true value comes from Richard Grant's ability to tell stories in a nonjudgmental fashion. His sheer humanity shines through. The stories in DFP utterly ring true, as much about Alabama as MS. The Delta is a different world from Jackson or Birmingham, of course, but many of the problems in state education and correctional facilities are similar. Sadly, I suspect the same could be said for several other Deep South states. The way the author reveals his information prevents boredom when reading about decades old problems. "*Dispatches from Pluto*" will remain with readers far beyond the final page. Highly recommended. ~ Bonnie Bartel Latino is the co-author of "*Your Gift to Me*," an award winning military mystery and mystical love story.

My husband and I spent time in the Delta because we taught at the Oxford Conference for the Book for three years. We also went on three Delta Literary tours. When we were in the Delta, there was something magical about the place but I couldn't put my finger on it. I kept wanting to go back to Mississippi where folks are proud of their land and their heritage. Richard Grant nails what it is that makes the Delta so special. with his wonderful, rich, funny memoir. The characters he describes are people you can only meet in Mississippi, and with an open mind, he embraces his new friends and his new house and becomes a more complete person doing it. The theme of the book is that you can't judge things too quickly - Look behind the obvious no matter where you are, and you will find

joy and meaning. Try to get to know people - whether it's your mailman, your librarian, or your next door neighbor. Everyone has a story and you can learn from it. Go out of your comfort zone and you'll not only be shocked at what you discover about yourself, but the world will shimmer and shine.

The author decided [perhaps a bit impetuously] to buy an old house in the hinterlands of the 'Delta.' Along with his fiancée the move is made, the adventure begins; amid the snakes and insects, poverty and racism, good neighbors and bad-- they deal with the politics, the food, the gun culture, and more happily with the hospitality and the wonderful Mississippi Delta blues tradition. It's a fun read if you want to see what it's like to survive [and thrive] in one of America's poorest and least educated regions .

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