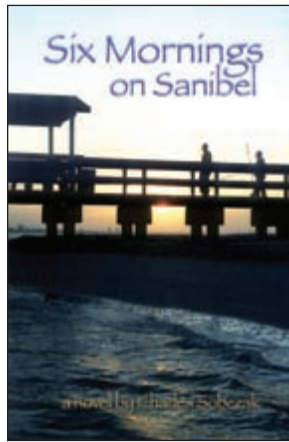


BEACH READING

Six Mornings on Sanibel

By Charles Sobczak
(Indigo Press, \$13.95)

REVIEWED BY PRUDY TAYLOR BOARD
Special to Florida Weekly



Only two rules govern the books reviewed by this columnist. First, they must either be written by Florida authors or be about Florida. Second, they cannot be self-published or published by a vanity press. Today, it is more difficult for a beginning or midlist author to be published than at any other time in our history. A number of reasons explain this phenomenon, but none have to do with the quality of the work submitted.

This situation has resulted in an explosion of small, independent publishers. And there are at least two types. The first is created by an individual who wants to publish quality (or at least commercial) fiction by new authors—excluding, for the most part, his or her own work. This publisher has an editorial staff that reads and evaluates manuscripts, pays advances (usually small) and royalties, and edits and calls for revisions of manuscripts until they reach an acceptable standard of proficiency. The second is the small press created by an author for the sole, specific purpose of publishing his or her own work.

Vanity presses aren't included here, but they are what their name implies. You hand them your manuscript, you pay X number of dollars, and they print your book and deliver the number of copies delineated in your contract. These folks are really glorified printers.

Having said that, we come to "Six Mornings on Sanibel," a novel self-published by Charles Sobczak who created Indigo Press to publish his own books. This book is being reviewed because Sobczak has accomplished a noteworthy feat. Since its publication in late 1999, 21,000 copies have sold. Granted, he has a captive market in Sanibel residents and vacationers, that's still impressive.

Basically it's the story of Richard Evans, an overweight, disillusioned, emotionally-dead divorce lawyer from Peoria who vacations on Sanibel with his wife and two spoiled sons. Evans, meets retired fishing guide, Carl Johnson, on a fishing pier and during the ensuing six-days, the men bond. Evans listens to Johnson's fishing stories—each with a message—and by the end of the week is a changed man.

Technically, the book is uneven. The prose is sometimes awkward and there are many violations of point of view. And a warning: if you are not a fishing addict, you may find yourself skipping pages because Sobczak goes into minute detail about fishing and the fish in the waters off Sanibel. But it's a good read. ■

The English American: A Novel

By Alison Larkin
(Simon and Schuster, \$24)

REVIEWED BY EALISH WADDELL
Special to Florida Weekly



Pippa's fanciful, imaginative nature has often put her at odds with her staid, stolid English family, but since Pippa is adopted, this seems to her to be par for the course. Though she enjoyed a happy, privileged childhood and dearly loves her parents and sister, she can't help but wonder whether her more unusual traits and talents stem from some unknown branch of her American family tree.

So in the spring of her 28th year, Pippa decides finally to contact her birth parents, hoping it will somehow bring the peace of mind she has always felt lacking. Reunited with the parents she never knew, Pippa is shocked to see how much she resembles these strangers, and yet peace of mind does not come.

Her mother is warm and welcoming and flamboyant with the artistic temperament Pippa always cherished, but she gradually reveals herself to also be a self-absorbed, emotionally volatile drama queen with a suffocating attachment to her newfound daughter.

With her father, Pippa finds an instant natural rapport, even though his neo-conservative views and shady politi-

cal involvements are the polar opposite of her own ideals. But his refusal to get past the shame of her illegitimacy builds a wedge between them that can't be ignored.

Confused and exhausted, Pippa draws away from both her old and new lives, retreating to New York City, where new friends and an unexpected performing career beckon her to a world beyond her comfort zone.

Pippa had always expected that she would recognize in her biological parents the ready-made, grown-up versions of the person she was always meant to become. Instead she realizes that her parents, both sets of them, have only planted seeds of both nature and nurture, and that it is up to Pippa to make herself bloom.

In this enjoyable first novel, it's a pleasure to watch her do just that. ■

Books reviewed in this column are available online or at your local bookstore.

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