

# FEATURES



## FIRST MONDAYS READING GROUP

### First Mondays book group discusses *Outliers*

By Dick Carter

It was still hot on October 7th when the First Mondays Reading Group met for their monthly discussion, so they assembled inside the Community Hall. There was a good turnout of 17 readers on hand. Discussion leader Priscilla Wanerus couldn't be with them, so Dick Carter, who had suggested this month's book, led the conversation.

Before they got started on their discussion, it was shared that there will be a Piedmont Adult Recreation Expo on Sunday, November 17th, from 2 to 4:30 PM at the Veterans Building. Representatives from groups that provide recreation in Piedmont for adults, including the reading group, will be there to tell attendees about their activities and how to get involved.

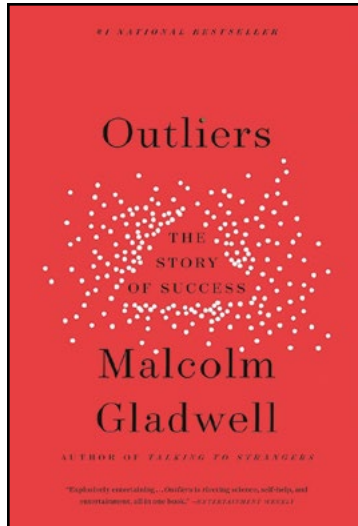
The book for this day's discussion was *Outliers: The Story of Success* by Malcolm Gladwell. The author wants us to better understand the world of "outliers." These are the best and the brightest, the most famous and the most successful people. What makes them different? Gladwell says we pay too much attention to what successful people are like, and too little attention to where they are from. He explains why some people become software billionaires, what it takes to be a great soccer player, why Asians are good at math, and what made the Beatles the greatest rock band.

Gladwell believes the idea of the "self-made man" is a myth, and that once you reach a certain threshold, increased abilities no longer help you succeed. He says world-class mastery of anything demands around 10,000 hours of practice. The month

and year you're born in can have a huge effect on what you achieve. How you are raised can radically impact how successful you become. Where you're from geographically and culturally is important for success and recognizing it can prevent failure. Gladwell contends if we understand this, we can create more opportunities for people to succeed.

The readers generally liked *Outliers*. They found it interesting and easy to read, and agreed Gladwell is an excellent storyteller. They liked his premise and could relate to the different stories and the lessons he is trying to communicate. The book provides a fuller picture of what is going on in life, and the group could personally relate to examples Gladwell presents. They knew of "redshirting kindergarteners" where parents hold their children back a year so they can be the oldest and most mature members of their classes. It was also helpful to understand cultural environments, and how junior Korean pilots would be reluctant to voice a concern to their older co-pilots with disastrous consequences.

There was a significant backlash to the book. While some readers liked some aspects of the book, they didn't care for others. Gladwell mainly presents others' research, and they felt he cherry picks examples and research that supports his positions. Gladwell recognizes outliers are talented people, but it seemed underplayed to some, as is just plain luck and being in the right place at the right time. What would Bill Gates have been if he didn't have a high school situation that let him have practically unlimited access to computer programming time? Probably successful too.



Other interesting questions also came out of the conversation. The success of Chinese Olympic divers, who are identified at a very young age and do little else for the next 10 plus years of their lives, raised the question, do we need diverse educations or just concentrated study for success?

Bob Hall observed that the group will have the opportunity to learn more about the factors behind the success of four American presidents in the group's selection of *Leadership: In Turbulent Times* by historian Doris Kearns Goodwin as the selection for December. The readers had also previously selected *North Woods* by Danile Mason for November. After hearing reviews of three fiction possibilities, the group selected the classic *A Farewell to Arms* by Ernest Hemingway for the first book of 2025.

The group's next discussion will be on November 4 at 1:30 PM. Weather permitting, it will be outside the Japanese Tea House in Piedmont Park. New readers are welcome to join and there is no fee. Register at <https://bit.ly/3R86PP4>.

### Piedmonters Mark & Connie Herrick publish 3rd book *Ripley's Road Trip*, from SF to Vancouver, now available

By Jay Russell

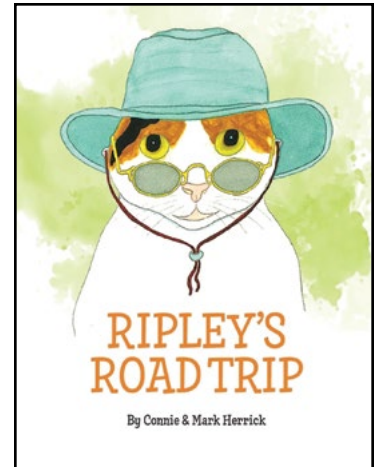
Long time Piedmont residents Connie and Mark Herrick have published the third installment of their children's book series, *Ripley's Road Trip*. The couple wrote and illustrated the book which delivers funny, happy reading for elementary school readers.

*Ripley's Road Trip* brings back the Herricks' calico cat yet again and Ripley's propensity for adventure comes to life in vibrant watercolor illustrations. Ripley joins four legged pals Pele and Kapo on the open road in the family's converted electric van.

The Herricks began the Ripley and Friendz Collection in 2021 with *Ripley's World*, and followed with *Ripley's Missing Locket*, a sequel that hit bookshelves in 2022. The third installment takes readers on a journey up the Pacific Coast, from San Francisco to Vancouver.

The books are created by Connie as the story-teller and Mark as illustrator.

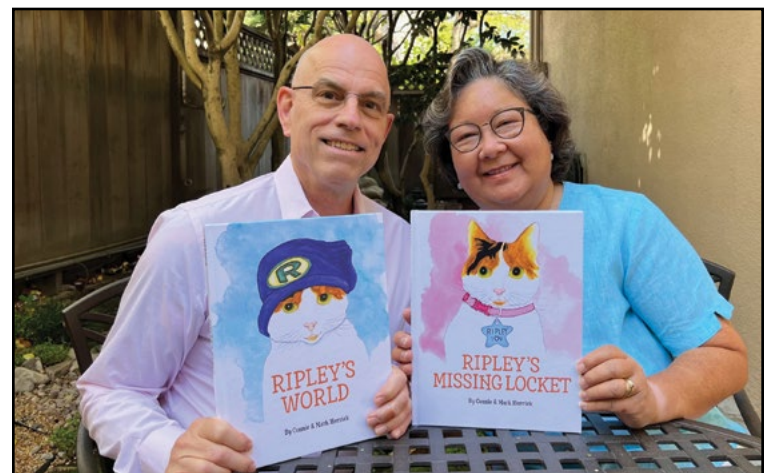
"We wanted to create stories that not only entertain but also foster a love of nature, adventure, and friendship," said Connie.



"*Ripley's Road Trip* is all about exploring new places, making new friends and discovering the magic within us. It's a celebration of the beauty of our world and the joy of discovery."

*Ripley's Road Trip* is available worldwide in hardcover (\$28.95), paperback (\$19.95), and eBook (\$9.99) on Apple Books, Barnes & Noble, Rakuten-Kobo, eBooks, Indigo, Adlibris, and more. Profits from book sales contribute to animal adoption and wildlife preservation efforts.

For more information visit [RipleyandFriendz.com](http://RipleyandFriendz.com).



Piedmont residents Connie and Mark Herrick, an author-illustrator duo, have published their latest children's book, *Ripley's Road Trip*.



Participants at the First Mondays Reading Group gathering on October 7 included Albert Chen, Adrienne Hamlin, Judy Love, Ken Young, Darby and Gerry Gregg, Laura Goldman, Carol Long, Bob Hall, Nancy Henn, Claudine Bach, Martin Levy, Phyllis Van Kranenburgh, Melba Yee, Mike Henn, Karin Fetherston, and Dick Carter.

**RIPLEY'S ROAD TRIP**  
Book Three in the Ripley and Friendz Collection

**Ripley's First Road Trip**

"Ripley had never seen the ocean or anything like it. The bright sunshine sprinkled the waves with a blanket of sparkly silver glitter. She could not stop looking at it.

"The ocean is so beautiful. It's as big as the sky! Does Hariel know there is this much water to swim in?" wondered Ripley.

**Lots of Fun Destinations**

"We're off to Capilano Suspension Bridge Park," announced The Boy. "I can't wait to drive over the bridge," woofed Kapo.

"We're not going to drive over it, Kapo. We're going to walk over it!" said The Boy. "And remember Kapo, that's walk, not run," said Pele.

**Contact Us**

Connie & Mark Herrick  
RipleyandFriendz.com  
editor@herrickpublishing.com