

## BOOK CLUB NEWS

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RICHARD BASS, Coördinator    Cell: 323-533-3550    [rbass9210@yahoo.com](mailto:rbass9210@yahoo.com)

### ***The Seven Stairs: An Adventure of the Heart***    by Stuart Brent



“I had decided to become a bookseller because I loved good books. I assumed there must be many others who shared a love for reading and that I could minister to their needs. I thought of this as a calling.”

— **Stuart Brent, *The Seven Stairs: An Adventure of the Heart***

Left: Stuart Brent talking with a customer, as was his profound pleasure, in 1962. He moved *The Seven Stairs* from Rush Street to Michigan Avenue in 1952.

“In 1946, our father, Stuart Brent, founded his first bookstore, *The Seven Stairs*, on Rush Street in Chicago, using a GI loan and money he borrowed from his brother-in-law. He later wrote about it in his book, *The Seven Stairs*. In 1952 or thereabouts, Brent moved the bookstore to Michigan Avenue, where it was eventually designated a landmark by The City of Chicago. He also wrote three children’s books about our dog, Mr. Toast. My father was fond of saying that he was lucky because his vocation and his avocation were one and the same. My father didn’t just go to work every day in his bookstore. He was always about books.”

- [stuartbrent.com](http://stuartbrent.com)

[Click here](#) to view the PBS *Artbeat* edition on Stuart Brent that aired January 5, 2018.

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**Discussion Leader:** Richard Bass, substituting for Marion Kluger

Although I did not find Bookseller Stuart Brent's "adventure" consistently engaging, several of his thoughts jumped out at me throughout. I began the discussion with this question: What is your take-away from this book?

- ❖ Stuart Brent was a voracious reader.
- ❖ He wants others to love books.
- ❖ He loves to talk about books.
- ❖ I (Ginger) bought a book from Stuart Brent.
- ❖ He developed a coterie of people that supported him.
- ❖ Reading requires your participation.
- ❖ I love reading like he did.
- ❖ The last two chapters said it all.
- ❖ He shared personal stories while talking about books.
- ❖ He got to know his buyers.
- ❖ Bookstores were important politically and were mini-libraries.
- ❖ He wore out his wife with business and children.
- ❖ Advice to writers: keep writing.
- ❖ He valued teachers.
- ❖ Brent's "100 Must-Read Books" List is interesting; his tongue-in-cheek categories amuse.
- ❖ He sold books through human contact.
- ❖ Are small book stores as gathering places a thing of the past?



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While readers admired Stuart Brent, opinions were mixed on the book. “For the first time, I didn’t finish a book.” “Inspirational; an interesting guy ‘ministering to his (customers’) needs.” “Being from Chicago, I enjoyed the book.” “The beginning was boring, name-dropping, although humorous.” “The beginning was tedious; would not be friends with him; narcissistic.” “The beginning was shallow; got some interesting quotes from it and that’s good enough.” “Medium rare: inconsistent meaningfulness for me.” “His ‘100 Must-Read Books’ were amusing.” “A few well-put phrases and thoughts kept me reading.” “Reminded me of *The Storied Life of A. J. Fikry*.” “I enjoyed the discussion more than the book.” “Kept my interest.” “Wondered about his family with his passion, strictness and time away.”

Another reader referred us to Stuart Brent’s 2010 [obituary](#) in the *Chicago Tribune*.

Join us after our summer hiatus on **September 21, 2018**, when we discuss my nominee *The Job*, by Sinclair Lewis. I will lead the discussion. Happy reading!  
Richard