

DREAM JOB

books for inspiration, instruction and caution

Hand to Mouth: A Chronicle of Early Failure

Paul Auster (2003)

Auster was a failure for years: as a screenwriter, merchant seaman, translator, pulp fiction writer, cataloger, and card game designer. Ultimately encouraging, since we know his failure was temporary. Includes his card-game design and his virtually unknown (great) mystery novel.

Life on a Mediaeval Barony: A Picture of a Typical Feudal Community in the Thirteenth Century

William Stearns Davis (1923, reprinted 2004)

A useful reminder of how good we actually have it. A best-seller in the world of medieval scholarship.

4-Hour Work Week: Escape 9-5, Live Anywhere, and Join the New Rich

Timothy Ferris (2007)

Written before the current economic crash, it presents some now silly ideas about international finance.

Harriet the Spy

Louise Fitzhugh (1966)

Harriet knows she wants to be a writer and practices by spying on her neighbors and friends and then writing it all into her “notebook.” A cautionary tale for would-be artists about the dangers of honesty—and a reminder about the vulnerability of childhood. Highly recommended.

Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War

Che Guevara (1968)

Probing Volcanoes

Laurie Lindrop (2003)

Are you cut out to be a volcanologist? One scientist presents an easy test, “Like any grand and destructive spectacle, volcanoes have alternately attracted and terrified humanity through the ages. The difference between ordinary people and volcanologists is that, with us, the appeal far out-weighs the terror . . . Most people flee from erupting volcanoes. We head straight for them.”

Riding Rockets: The Outrageous Tales of a Space Shuttle Astronaut

Mike Mullane (2006)

Beginning with an exam from a NASA proctologist, this is an informative and amusing memoir. Includes some discussion of sexism in the NASA space program.

Living the Good Life

Helen and Scott Nearing (1955)

Radicals who were kicked out of the communist party, the Nearings left New York in 1932 for a homestead in rural Vermont. A how-to manual for creating a sustainable life that where you can grow your own vegetables, build your own house, spend four hours a day making art while rejecting capitalism.

The Dance Handbook

Allen Robertson & Donald Hutera, with an introduction by Merce Cunningham (1988)
A compact chronology of dance milestones, starting in the 1800s. Imperative if you want to sound like you know what you're talking about.

Rock 'n Roll Camp for Girls: How to Start a Band, Write Songs, Record an Album, and Rock Out!

Rock 'n' Roll Camp for Girls (2008)

Directions for everything from playing guitar to setting up an amp to writing a song. Includes a history of women in rock and general encouragement to make noise and “take up space.” The Rock ‘n’ Roll Camp for Girls is an actual non-profit camp for 8-18 year old girls—it’s the subject of the (great) documentary, *Girls Rock!*, by local filmmakers Shane King and Arne Johnson.

Do What You Are: Discover the Perfect Career for You Through the Secrets of Personality Tests

Paul D. Tieger and Barbara Barron-Tieger (1992)

Uses the Myers-Briggs test to analyze your personality and match you with a perfect job. Some people are skeptical, but accurately told me that I would enjoy being a librarian . . .

Allure: Confessions of a Beauty Editor

Linda Wells (2006)

Filled with instructions for navigating the world of beauty, the book is part insincere memoir and part fascist beauty tips. Guaranteed to make you more prepared to run the beauty shop of your dreams—and convince you that you're uglier than you ever imagined.

By Erin Wilson, for Frankenart Mart, 2009