

# BOOK REVIEWS

## MAMMOTH LETTERS: RUNNING AWAY TO A MOUNTAIN TOWN

By Lunch

Jennifer Crittenden lived in Mammoth from August, 2014 through January, 2016. She moved here with her family from Del Mar on a little bit of a lark and adventure.

"The Mammoth Letters" is, as she describes, an "unintended" book which arose from the letters and journals she sent back to her friends in the San Diego area describing her stranger-in-a-strange-land adaptation to mountain living.

The book is part Erma Bombeck and part Wallace Stegner, as chapters featuring her narrative, day-to-day observations are woven together with chapters on geology, bears, the search for missing hiker Matthew Greene and more.

Sometimes it works. Sometimes it doesn't.

The 20-page synopsis of Jack Fisher's book "Stopping The Road" about the efforts to kill a proposed highway across the Sierra from Mammoth ... I think you're better off skipping the chapter and buying Fisher's book.

Her narrative stuff about day-to-day life in Mammoth is stronger. She writes well. Very well. And I suppose her cute story about signing up for a post office box will make any suburbanite chuckle. Myself, I think a better post office

story, if you really wanted to write a defining story about the Mammoth Lakes post office, would be about former postmaster Jim Epperly and his resemblance in character to Major Major from Joe Heller's Catch-22.

Major Major was the guy who would crawl out of his office window whenever there was a knock at the door.

Here's Crittenden herself on the structure of the book: "When someone points out that you're wearing mismatched socks and look like a fool, do

you confess that the socks were greatly deliberated and carefully chosen, or do you just say, "Oh, you're right! Stupid me!" I was trying something out, that is, providing factual information along with personal stories, a hybrid of personal essays and narrative nonfiction. As with all experiments, thankfully, you always learn something. Maybe you could just tell people to skip the boring bits. That's what I do."

The above really speaks to me. She's self-deprecating and not defensive. It

makes her likable, and you forgive her when she gets a few things wrong.

Like when she cites, secondhand, that Mammoth has never beaten Bishop in football. Though they'll never play again due to Mammoth's transition to 8-man, Mammoth, under Coach Tom Gault, beat Bishop as recently as 2007 (20-18).

Lunch rating: A good meander. And honestly, because of its peripatetic nature, ideally suited to the guest room night table.

**FRIENDLY MOUNTAIN ATMOSPHERE**

**HAPPY HOUR**  
 MON: ALL NIGHT  
 SUN & THURS: DURING GAMES  
 FOOD & DRINK  
 SPECIALS

**OPEN DAILY**  
 11 AM - MIDNIGHT  
 LOCATED INSIDE  
**John's PIZZA WORKS**

**OUTLAW SALOON**  
**SPORTS BAR**

**SUNDAYS OPEN AT 10AM**  
 SUN, NOV 5  
 10AM