

Border Songs by Jim Lynch (2009)

Reviewed by Jules McLeland



This is the story of a Border Patrol agent, Brandon Vanderkool and his dairy farmer family that live on the Canadian/American border in Blaine. The young border patrol agent is severely dyslexic, six feet 8 inches tall and is a very perceptive viewer of everything he sees in his area.

He also has a passion for animals but doesn't get along very well with people as he has trouble communicating with them. Norm, Brandon's dad had problems with his cows getting sick and trouble with his manure pond. He had trouble with his knee and couldn't walk very well. He loved certain cows and thought his son worked well with them but wanted him to be in the world. His father is working on a large sail boat which has been his dream project for years. His mother has the beginnings of dementia. Brandon likes to create art and walks around whenever he goes and looks for birds. He is focused on counting birds.

Brandon is well known in this area as he grew up on the farm. The Canadians were building mansions on their side of the border and dairy farms on the US side. The border was a ditch and Brandon's job was to patrol it. His father wanted more for him than working at the dairy farm so he pushed him into the border patrol. He has a real knack for it as he was very observant. He found a number of smugglers trying to smuggle people across the border. He worked at the border at the beginning of the period of high tech cameras on poles.

His supervisor thought he had a knack as a border patrol agent as he always seemed to find smugglers. There was a dope smuggler operation that I remember reading about in the newspaper. He used some real facts in his book such as a tunnel built to smuggle drugs across the border & about houses rented by Canadians to grow marijuana.

I enjoyed this story because of where it took place. If you are familiar with Whatcom County you'll enjoy it. He mentioned the girls scout hands across the border where he has to do an evacuation because of a bomb threat. I enjoyed that as my daughter participated in one of these events many years ago. He wrote about off beat characters which gives the book its charm. This was a fun Whatcom reads book as it was about the border area. The author lives in Olympia and Lopez Library has an autographed copy of the book.