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Book Notes

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BOOK NOTES

Elizabeth Crook's *The Raven's Bride* (Doubleday, 666 Fifth Ave., New York 10103) subtitled "A Novel of Eliza, Sam Houston's First Wife," is a good novel with an eye to history. Although one of its principal characters dominated much of Texas history, Crook limits her story to his years in Tennessee. And it offers insight into the ways of that place at that time in its struggles with democracy and propriety. Crook discusses the politics of the era, especially of Andrew Jackson to claim the presidency deprived by John Quincy Adams and Henry Clay, with good understanding of the rough-and-tumble nature of the democratic "game" of presidential pursuit at that time, as well as Houston's own quest for political advancement. Through it all is woven the complex character of Eliza Allen, the child-woman who captured the heart of a man twice her age, then lost him — and for many years her own fulfillment — in a web of her own lack of adjustment to a father and family. She loved him, and he her, but neither could bridge the chasm of pride, resentment, and unrealistic expectations of the other. Houston's well-known affiliation with Cherokee ways complicated their search for each other, but as presented here, two prime reasons are advanced for their failure at marriage: her inability to commit to him, and his blind adherence to a double standard in sexual matters. The latter seems less relevant in a later time, but is presented in the context of their time quite accurately. *The Raven's Bride* is recommended for those who would understand Houston's many reasons for leaving Tennessee for life in Texas. Novel or no, it can help that understanding.

Another kind of book, also dealing with Houston, is Jeff Long, *Duel of Eagles: The Mexican and U.S. Fight for the Alamo* (William Morrow & Co., Inc., 105 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016). This is a whole different can of worms. Long decided that just about everything connected with the "traditional" interpretation of Texas history, at least as far as it had anything to do with Mexico, was wrong. He is not subtle about this either, for he frankly states his case on every page. The Texas revolution, according to Long, was nothing but a land grab by the United States, has not one redeeming feature, and was accomplished by some of the lowest human scum available for the job. No character flaw in one of the Anglo revolutionists is too minor for him to exploit, and unfortunately our founders provided him with many. On the other hand, he views the Mexican officials for the most part as sterling characters, especially the Tejanos, who always were presented as betrayed or cheated and hated by both sides.

My fellow citizens of Nacogdoches will be thrilled to find their town labeled "decadent" (p. 17) and characterized as a "grotesque mongrel of a town" (p. 19). Probably some who have read this book will wonder what the present writer thinks of Long's treatment of William B. Travis as "silly," vain, incompetent, and generally worthless. Reminds me of a line in a Gary Cooper movie, "The Fountainhead." Coop played an architect

who was attacked cruelly by a critic. When they were alone, the critic asked what the architect really thought of him. "But I don't think of you," came the reply.

Al Lowman gave me a line about another book that fits my reaction to this one: "For those who like this sort of thing, this is the sort of thing they will like." I don't.

Robert Leckie's *None Died In Vain: The Saga of the American Civil War* (Harper Collins Publishers, 10 East 53rd St., New York 10022) is an excellent history of our nation's great test of union. In fact, I intend to use it as a text in future offerings of a course on the war. He begins with an excellent review of the causes of conflict, especially in dealing with slavery. There is an admirable balance between military v. other aspects; often books are good on the military phase but slight the other parts, or vice versa. Leckie is especially competent at narrative writing, and provides plenty of anecdotes and humor to enhance his story, including one of the best "lawyer jokes," involving U.S. Grant, ever heard. There are useful maps, but no photographs; whether or not a reader needs them to be reminded of the appearance of his characters, they would have eased the pace of reading over 600 pages. But what is on those pages is some of the best writing on the Civil War ever done. Definitely recommended.

The anniversary of "WWII, the Big One," is upon us, and like other fields of history when anniversaries or social movements intervene, it is "hot." Among the books appearing in honor of the event is *Remembering Pearl Harbor: Eyewitness Accounts By U.S. Military Men And Women*, edited by Robert S. LaForte and Ronald E. Marcello (SR Books, 104 Greenhill Avenue, Wilmington, DE 19805).

Remembering Pearl Harbor is the product of interviews with survivors of the infamous event conducted by Marcello over a period of years. La Forte wrote the text that accompanies and connects the transcripts of the interviews themselves. Both are historians at the University of North Texas, where La Forte chairs the Department of History and Marcello directs the oral history program. And both bring excellent scholarship and a sensitive perspective to their subject. Two things come to mind from the reading: first, each of us is the center of our own universe, and regardless of the importance of an event our reaction to that event is limited; and second, the lack of rancor expressed in these pages. Perhaps fifty years has lessened the anger, and old men and women have mellowed. What each seems to remember most about Pearl Harbor is those with whom they shared the moment, and how they and their companions fared during one of the most important mornings in our nation's history.

One of the most "fun" books around during these days of remembrance of "WWII, the Big One," as Archie Bunker used to say, is *Laugh, Cry and Remember: The Journal of a G.I. Lady*, by Clarice F. Pollard (Journeys Press, Box 32354, Phoenix, AZ 85064). It is the story of the

author's life as a member of the WAAC/WAC. It is a pertinent story, for we are on the lead edge of the fiftieth anniversary of the war, and particularly so far for East Texans, for she experienced part of her training in Nacogdoches on the campus of Stephen F. Austin State Teacher's College. The college survived the war, partly because President Paul Boynton rented facilities to the Army for the WAC's training. But that is another story.

As I said in the Foreword Clarice asked me to write for her book, "Pollard is an excellent example of [a] citizen-soldier. When her country went to war, she became an air-raid warden and USO hostess in Brooklyn, at the time thinking that was all a woman could do. When Congress created the female Armed Forces, she became one of the first enrollees in the Woman's Auxiliary Army Corps, later the Women's Army Corps, and accepted a status that was neither 'in' nor 'out' of the Army. She trained in Georgia and in Nacogdoches, Texas, in Administration school, then served in the Pacific Northwest, New Orleans, Virginia and finally New York state, enthusiastically tackling drafting, office work, recruiting, entertainment, caring for wounded, and above all, boosting everyone's morale."

Pollard's book is a significant contribution to the literature of World War II, especially the "women's war" of the WACs.

Let The Good Times Roll: Life At Home In America During World War II (Paradon House, 90 Fifth Avenue, New York 10011; \$14.95), by Paul D. Casdorff, provides a recent interpretation of home-front activities during America's largest war of the century. Similar to Richard R. Lingeman's "*Don't You Know There's A War On? The American Home Front, 1941-1945* (1976), Casdorff's book contains more narrative of the shooting war contemporary to the events at home. It also contains more personal references to the author's youthful memories of the war. Lingeman may have more details, and his book is arranged topically. Casdorff's technique is a true chronicle that begins with Pearl Harbor and ends with the Japanese surrender in August 1945; each chapter covers several months, which are indicated in the chapter's title.

The title of the book, *Let The Good Times Roll*, pretty much sums the author's thesis that American society took to the war not only in the sense of national purpose — such as fighting for freedom and other similar sentiments — but in the sense of universal participation that created a national feeling of relief from the Depression and release from the depressing aspects of small-town, restricted life. Now Americans were on the move, throughout the world and throughout the country, working, playing, *doing* things, sometimes to excess, that peace-time evolution might never have achieved. Fads, tastes, rationing, all such things you would expect to find here, are here. Sports, entertainment, and literary activities of the war years may be found as well. For some, Casdorff's book will bring on remembrance; for younger readers, information about an era they may think was not quite Camelot, but not quite real, either. Some of it I do remember.

Nazis In The Pineywoods, by Mark Choate (Best of East Texas Publishers, Box 1657, Lufkin, TX 75901) began as an academic thesis at Stephen F. Austin State University, but in a way it began much earlier: Mark's father had been a prisoner of war during World War II, and he wanted to understand more about the experience and how his father's nation dealt with their own prisoners of war. The thesis was exceptional, and is now available to a wider audience in this published form.

Choate found that the U.S. has not had a consistent policy in this matter, so the WWII experience was unlike previous examples. The prisoners of war brought to East Texas, mostly Germans, filled the need for additional labor in the timber industry because so many of our men were in the service. He describes the political efforts of lumberman Ernest Kurth to locate prison camps in Nacogdoches and Angelina counties and the working and living conditions when they arrived. He also examines their minimal attempts to escape. He found that the Germans were willing workers, and that some liked the area sufficiently to repatriate here when the war ended, although they first had to return to Germany.

This is a good book for those interested in the home front during World War II.

Two books of use and interest to Texas writers are available. The first is the *1991-1992 Writers and Publishers Guide To Texas Markets*, edited by Georgia Kemp Caraway (University of North Texas Press, Box 13856, Denton, TX 76203-3856). This book contains much of value for those who write and want to publish. There are several articles on publishing, followed by listings of available markets for books, magazine articles, plays for screen and stage, and newspapers — daily, weekly, and minority. Other listings include writer's groups, publisher organizations, graduate writing programs, conferences and seminars, agents and consultants, and literary prizes, awards, fellowships, grants, retreats, etc. What might you find here?

Take the University of North Texas Press, the publisher of this volume, listed on page 49. We have the name and address of the press and its director, Fran Vick; we learn that it publishes folklore, Texana, general interest nonfiction, guide books, history, military, poetry, women's issues, critical biography, etc.; that it issues in hardback, paperback, and reprints; that the press began in 1988 and has published sixteen books; that it is open to first-time writers, prefers a query letter before reviewing the MS, which it says it will do in six weeks, pays "standard industry payment," and uses Texas A&M Press as a distributor. And if that doesn't please you, turn to page 166 and find yourself an agent.

The other useful book is an evergreen; the *1992-93 Texas Almanac*, edited by Mike Kingston for *The Dallas Morning News* and distributed by Gulf Publishing Co., Box 2608, Houston, TX 77252. The *Almanac* has been around for about a century and a half, and is full of data on

Texas. Testimony: when Dr. Ralph W. Steen donated his personal library to his namesake library on the Stephen F. Austin campus, he kept his current *Almanac*; and a colleague going to Korea on a visiting professorship, took along his *Almanac* because he thought he might be asked to make speeches about Texas, and considered it the most compact resource he could fit into his luggage. This edition contains articles on birds of Texas, a history of Central Texas, the Belo Corporation, and sections on Environment, Recreation, Population, Counties, Courageous Texans, Transportation, Constitution, Media, Crime, Symbols of Texas, Politics and Government, Business and Industry, Agriculture, Education, Culture, History of Spain, and Energy, and thank goodness, it is indexed. Maps, photos, ads, and other interesting features included.

Enough with writers; let's be readers in *The American Reader: Words That Moved A Nation* (Harper Collins, 10 East 53rd St., NY 10022), edited by Diane Ravitch. *American Reader* contains selections from the Colonial Days and The Revolution, The New Nation, Antebellum America, Reform and Expansion, Prelude to [Civil] War, The Civil War, After the Civil War, The Progressive Age, WWI and After, Depression and WWII, After WWII, Troubled Times, and Contemporary Times. Want to find a copy of the Declaration of Independence, Washington's Farewell Address, Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, the words to "Oh How I Hate To Get Up In The Morning" or "Union Maid", or John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address? These and about 200 other interesting groups of "words" that have defined and interpreted America are available. The editor has provided a brief introductory and/or interpretative comment for each.

John Lash's *Cowboy Stories From East Texas* (Hendrick-Long Publishing Co., Dallas, TX 75225), with illustrations by the author, is a book for young readers. The introduction sets the scene for those who are not familiar with the flora, fauna, and folks of Deep East Texas, and some might think the tales about "wampus-cats" and such are an exaggeration if they haven't heard the creature's scream themselves. Then, there are eight stories, each revolving around the daily activities of Bubba, Daddy Bob, Nanny, and various relatives, friends, and animals — domestic and wild. All eight celebrate the rural way of life in southeast Texas, and for a mature reader, would suggest perils and the tenuousness of such a life. For younger readers, the stories are adventurous descriptions of events that also teach much about the folkways of the area.

An interesting new biographical series is *The Confederate General* (National Historical Society, Box 975, Hicksville, NY 11802-0975), edited by William C. Davis with Julie Hoffman as assistant editor. Four of the projected five volumes have appeared. The project eventually will provide a biographical sketch and photograph of each of the men who achieved the rank of general officer in the Confederate army. The biographies are signed, of fairly uniform length, and provide the kind of information expected from such works. Some end with brief bibliographies. Volume

I contains entries from Daniel W. Adams to Howell Cobb; Volume II, Thomas Cobb to James Goggin; Volume III, George W. Gordon to Thomas Jordan; and Volume IV, John Kelly to William H. Payne. Obviously, not many are East Texans, but then we are interested in other places and folks, so for all our Civil War buffs, Confederate variety, this should be a good reference book. Genealogists might find it useful, too.

Deciding how to react to *Survive & Conquer: Texas in the '80s: Power—Money—Tragedy...Hope!* (Taylor Publishing Co., 1550 West Mockingbird Lane, Dallas, TX 75235; \$17.95), by M. Ray Perryman, is difficult. One could call it biography, for Perryman writes here of his life from graduate school at Rice to his intense involvement with the Texas economy as our leading economic prognosticator. One could also call the book a history of Texas, with a heavy slant on economics, for the turbulent 1980s. Perryman begins his story amid the boom late in the 1970s and early in the 1980s, roughly the years of the first administration of Governor William Clements, when oil sold for more than ever before, and as Perryman claimed, the legislature had to look for ways to spend all of its revenue. Apparently they forgot about higher education, at least at regional colleges, for I don't remember such largess. Anyway, Perryman predicted the bust that developed at mid-decade, and as is related in his book, was part of much that worked to turn the state's economy around. He claims that Texas in the 1990s will be more prosperous than the nation as a whole; indeed, the next quarter of a century looks great, he says, because of the changes made and those still in progress. Perryman wrote before the state comptroller forecast a \$5 billion deficit for state government in 1991; I read it and wrote this while the legislature still argued over whether or not to let us gamble our way out of the hole with a lottery (the old paramutal-betting-on-horses trick didn't work out), and eventually our readers will find out the answer to the puzzle. Right now, I don't know; he *did* predict the bust accurately, and he *did* predict the recovery when most everyone else still saw the ball rolling down hill. Let us all hope he is correct. Meanwhile, this is a good read for a review of the 1980s in Texas.