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Book Notes

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BOOK NOTES

What follows is personal observations on various publications that came our way. The great volume of such, plus our limited format, makes this the only way to acknowledge these important contributions. Besides, some have expressed interest in these musings:

William C. Davis, *Three Roads To The Alamo: The Lives and Fortunes of David Crockett, James Bowie, and William Barret Travis* (HarperCollins, 10 East 53rd St., New York, NY 10022), presents intertwined biographies of these three prominent leaders in the Texas Revolution. Owing to their greater age and national prominence before the Alamo, more pages are given to Crockett and Bowie than to Travis. We learn, among other things, that Crockett was much more "civilized" than his fame as a frontiersman through popular culture suggests; and that Bowie was more of a scoundrel, especially in land and slave-trading scams, and his ability to "con," than previously suspected. Travis receives his due as an urbane, youthful citizen in a crude, troubled time who catapulted to international fame through the failed defense of the Alamo. In the end, Jack Davis bought into the "redemption by the blood of the Alamo" that has affected so many other Texas historians. Nonetheless, we appreciate his kind words about a book titled *Travis*, published twenty-five years ago.

Ty Cashion's *Pigskin Pulpit: A Social History of Texas High School Football Coaches* (Texas State Historical Association, 2/306 Sid Richardson Hall, University of Texas, Austin Texas, 78712; \$29.95), is an excellent examination of the phenomenon of Texas high school football, told through the medium of the coaches who live or die (professionally and sometimes literally), on the performance of teenaged boys. Most of us have vivid memories of our high school coaches, and if they were active in Texas, likely Ty interviewed them and included them in his already classic tribute to and examination of this breed of Texans. The former Nacogdoches High School coach and later athletic director at Stephen F. Austin State University, Steve McCarty, made the cut. This is history and it is sports – and a good combination of the two.

Early Days In Franklin County, compiled by B.F. Hicks (Franklin County Historical Association, Majors-Parchman House, 701 Kaufman Street, Box 289, Mount Vernon, Texas, 75457), contains a Summary History of the Mt. Vernon *Optic-Herald*, Sketches of Mt. Vernon by Etta Lominack, Abstracts from Transcribed Land Records of Red River County, Transcribed Records of 1841 Indian Massacre of Ripley Family, and 1908 Text (U.S.D.A.) "Soil Survey of Franklin County, Texas." Historical articles herein were written by Col. Dan T. Bollin, Joe W. Gandy, J.C. McDonald, and W.M. Christian. Friend Hicks sent along a pretty poster featuring Mt. Vernon's favorite son, Dandy Don Meredith, the court house clock, and beautiful costumed ladies on the porch of a historic building. Hicks is the mover-and-shaker in historical consciousness and preservation in Mt. Vernon and Franklin County, and offers here this collection for the edification of others.

My Life in the Old Army: The Reminiscences of Abner Doubleday from the Collections of the New-York Historical Society, edited and annotated by Joseph E. Chance, with illustrations by Wil Martin (Texas Christian University

Press, TCU Box 297050, Fort Worth, Texas 76129; \$29.95), makes available the personal story of this US Army officer and Civil War commander. The focus is on Doubleday's years in Texas prior to the Civil War, and is based, as indicated by the title, on previously unpublished material. Most of us learned in our growing up that Doubleday "invented" baseball (not quite true but close enough to say that he had a prominent role in the popularizing of the game). What can be learned here is much about the "old" army in the pre-Civil War period, especially as it relates to frontier service.

Dan K. Utley and James W. Steely, *Guided With a Steady Hand: The Cultural Landscape of a Rural Texas Park* (Baylor University Press, Box 97363, Waco, Texas 76798), is the story of Mother Neff State Park, regarded as the first of the parks now operated by Texas Parks & Wildlife Department. It is as well a testimony to the legacy of the Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps. After visiting forty-one state historic parks as a participant in their evaluation for legislative review, one of my conclusions is that Texas – and probably America – would not have a park system without the CCC. The primary plus with this book is the experience and expertise of Utley and Steely. It also is but the first of additional studies by this team.

Lay Bare The Heart: An Autobiography of the Civil Rights Movement, by James Farmer (Texas Christian University Press, Box 297050, Fort Worth, Texas 76129; paper, \$14.95), is the autobiography of Farmer, born in racially segregated Marshall, Texas, and his rise to prominence as one of the founders of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). This is a reissue, with an introduction by Don Carleton, of Farmer's original version published by Arbor House in 1985. Now in advanced age and ill-health, Farmer still has a lesson in perseverance for us. His story, so much a part of one of the principal social revolutions of our century, is a compelling one. One is tempted to employ the bromide "Lest we forget" here. It is important that we do not.

V.R. Cardozier, *University of Texas of the Permian Basin: A History* (Eakin Press, Box 90159, Austin, Texas, 78709; paper, \$19.95), is, obviously, an institutional history of the branch of what some call THE university of our state. Be that as it may, Cardozier served as the first president for academic affairs (ten years), and the second president (four years), of the institution, and so should know whereof he writes. Our Friend Roger Olien gets a mention on page 71.

The Education of a Senator: Everett McKinley Dirksen (University of Illinois Press, 1325 South Oak Street, Champaign, Illinois, 61820), with an introduction by former Senator Howard Baker (Dirksen's son-in-law, senate majority leader, and chief of staff in the Reagan Administration), is the reminiscence of that venerable old windbag Dirksen. Prompted to some degree by ill-health and the end of his long career of public service, this is the story of Dirksen's growing up in Pekin, Illinois, his military service in WWI, his business career, and his essay into politics as a city councilman and member of the U.S. House of Representatives. Regrettably, it ends with his election to the Senate, so except for a few anecdotes worked in while discussing House activities, we never get to Dirksen's distinguished career as senate minority leader. I wish he had finished it. His was a marvelous story of public service, partisanship (good-natured and mean-spirited), and the pure corn that was his

trademark. If you ever heard him speak, that husky voice and syntax comes through his writing like a ghost of the past.

A slice of more recent Texas history is seen in Jay Dunston Milner's *Confessions of a Maddog: A Romp through the High-flying Texas Music and Literary Era of the Fifties to the Seventies* (University of North Texas Press, Box 311336, Denton, Texas, 76203; \$29.95). Milner was a full-fledged member of Maddog, Inc. ("Doing Indefinable Services to Mankind"), a loose but apparently firm association of Texas-born or based writers, "picker poets," and other creative sorts who defined the post-WWII artistic scene in Texas, or at least in Austin, which drew them from various parts of the state to be present when "it" happened. In addition to Milner, Maddogs included Billie Lee Brammer, Bud Shrake, Gary Cartwright, Dan Jenkins, Willie Nelson, Jerry Jeff Walker, maybe Larry McMurtry, and others. By Milner's recollection, Maddogs generally partied more than they created and their appetites, which probably robbed many of their potential, are a catalog of the personal indulgences of the era. Milner was a high school and college football player in Lubbock and at the University of Southern Mississippi, worked for various newspapers – including Hodding Carter's famed *Delta Democrat-Times* and the *New York Herald Tribune*, before returning to Texas in the 1960s and living the high life of a Maddog for two decades before his "rescue" in Lufkin. Much of it is thoughtful, most of it is provocative, some of it disturbing. But all of it seems an honest attempt to recreate the peculiar life of the Maddog who wrote it.

Roy Blount, Jr., *Crackers* (University of Georgia Press, Athens, Georgia, 30602; paper, \$14.95), is a republication in Georgia's Brown Transher Book series of a book first printed in 1977 and reissued annually through 1980. It is about "crackers," Jimmy Carter and his family, "More Carters" vignettes, various Southern leaders, and, mostly, about Blount and his take on being not just Southern but "cracker" Southern. Mid-century liberalism and a kind of warped sense of humor appear throughout this effort to explain the South and "crackers" to the nation, to the section and its citizens, and to the author himself, during the rising of Jimmy Carter. Some of this is like eavesdropping on a psychiatrist's session, but some of it is genuinely funny – Blount's cussing tickles me as often as it is gratuitous. Since being Southern and American at the same time has seemed difficult to reconcile to me, it is interesting to see another wrestle with the dilemma. Except he moved to New York and Massachusetts.

Thad Sitton, this time in partnership with James H. Conrad, has produced another great book on a subject central to the history of East Texas. *Nameless Towns, Texas Sawmill Communities, 1880-1942* (University of Texas Press, Box 7819, Austin, TX 78713-7819), discusses "company towns" as a concept before getting down to specific business on the sawmill towns I knew so well. My familiarity springs from summer visits to the homes of Uncle Bill and Aunt Thelma – Mr. and Mrs. W.L. Russell – and their six children in Wiergate and Burkeville. All four Russell boys were older, but I was contemporary with Eleanor Lois and Kathryn, with whom I attended Vacation Bible School, a week at a time, sponsored by Baptist, Church of God, or whatever denomination the Spirit moved to such youth ministry. Uncle Bill rose before the Bible

scholars to go to the mill and never returned before dark, six days a week. I remember that he also worked at mills in Newton and Bon Wier, and am certain there were more. Sitton and Conrad tell the stories of all our Uncle Bills and the mill towns where they toiled. I expect most were minus fingers, hard of hearing from exposure to the machinery, and lived close to the margin. Their labor usually was as under compensated as it was dangerous and abundant, at least during that time; OSHA could not have been imagined. These scholars made great use of the Forest History Collection at SFASU and the East Texas Sawmill Data Base project at the Texas Forestry Museum. Highly recommended.

Dixie Rising: How The South Is Shaping American Values, Politics, and Culture, by Peter Applebome (Times Books, New York, NY 10022), published in 1996 but just now finding its way here, is a most impressive examination of the contemporary South. Applebome, a Yankee transplant to the region, is a reporter for the *New York Times*. He has lived in several Southern cities, including Dallas and especially Atlanta, and has become a Southerner – almost. As a fan of Lewis Grizzard, if not a sharer of Lewis' political bias, I didn't take to his evaluation of the Bard from Moreland, Georgia, but I did agree with just about everything else. The thesis here is that the political philosophy of John C. Calhoun, rejected by the nation in the nineteenth-century, is triumphant late in the twentieth century, evidenced by the power of Southerners such as Newt Gingrich, Dick Armey, and Tom DeLay in the House and Trent Lott, Jessie Helms, etc., in the Senate. Even the power of fundamentalism *a la* Falwell, has Southern beginnings. Good examination of what is "right" or "wrong" with the South, depending on your perspective. And I learned that I am a "neo-Con" (something pejorative), just because I used to attend a Civil War Round Table.

The Cold War Comes to Main Street: America in 1950 (University Press of Kansas, 2501 West 15th St., Lawrence, Kansas 66049, \$39.95), by Lisle A. Rose, is for the purposeful reader. It is a scholarly examination what Rose thinks is the pivotal year of the modern period. He examines the resurrection of the "fundamentalist conservative" element in American politics, subdued if not dormant under the New Deal and Senator Arthur Vandenberg's bi-partisan leadership in foreign policy during WWII and the opening phases of the Cold War, under the leadership of Richard Nixon and Joseph McCarthy. Nixonism-become-McCarthyism worried us all that every unlikable in our midst was a subversive, that is when we weren't worrying about The Bomb and then the beginning of hostilities in Korea. Rose's point: 1950 witnessed our confirmation as anti-internal and external communist anything, which produced a more fearful society. I remember 1950 as a budding teenager; Rose's study produces much memory.

One is always pleased when a former student does well. Witness Richard Pennington's latest book, *Longhorn Hoops: The History of Texas Basketball* (University of Texas Press, Box 7819, Austin, TX 78713); this really means basketball at The University of Texas, so Horns are likely to be the most interested. Richard previously wrote of Longhorn football, so he knows his way around UT sports. Competitive men's basketball began at UT in 1906, not long after Dr. James A. Naismith nailed the first peach basket on the wall. The

story is told year-by-year, some times game-by-game, through 1998. Modern women's basketball began at UT in 1975, but coverage is provided for other women's athletic participation from 1900 until 1975 in civic competition. Abe Lemons, Jody Conradt, and other coaches and players, plus season records, are available here for the genuine UT roundball fan.

One of our favorite East Texans is Willie Lee Campbell Glass, daughter of one of the region's pioneer African American educators and herself a pioneer in education and public service for women. Her story is told in Patsy J. Hallman's *A Psalm of Life: Willie Lee Campbell Glass, The Story of A Woman Whose Life Made A Difference* (Eakin Press, P.O. Drawer 90159, Austin, TX 78709-0159, \$16.95). Mrs. Glass rose to the top of her profession in education, sharing her good fortune with everyone else along the way. Best example: she provided the land for a building for the Headstart program in Nacogdoches, and although she is a resident of Tyler, she always answers that her home town is Nacogdoches, where her father was principal of the high school for blacks during the days of segregation. Mrs. Glass' goodness and loving feeling for all humanity set the mark for the attitudes of all of us.

State of Mind: Texas Literature & Culture (Texas A&M Press, College Station, TX 77843-4354), by Tom Pilkington, is No. 10 in the Tarleton State University Southwestern Studies in the Humanities series. Pilkington, a University Scholar at Tarleton and a well-known teacher/writer of southwestern literature, begins with writers *about* Texas (Cabeza de Vaca, for example), but believes that Texas literature began with J. Frank Dobie in the 1920s. Here are twelve chapters on such topics as: the emergence of Texas literature; its association with the land, the military, the South, football, violence, etc.; and Larry McMurtry. The writing is crafted well and nearly all of Pilkington's conclusions are agreeable enough, save his calling East Texas a "backwater" when it comes to writing. He grew up in the Fort Worth area and has studied and taught always in central west Texas, so such provincialism is understandable. And he occasionally mentions the Texas Institute of Letters in less than complimentary ways, without explaining why. Inevitable conclusions are that McMurtry has dominated Texas literature since 1961, or for about half of the span Pilkington assigns to it, and that nearly all other creative writers in Texas are jealous or envious or harbor negative feelings about him. McMurtry is mentioned, sometimes even with praise, in each of Pilkington's chapters. That is dominance.

Finally, Old Friend A.C. Greene's *Sketches from the Five States of Texas* (Texas A&M Press, College Station, TX 77843-4354), contains selections from his long-running column, "Texas Sketches." Thus it is a potpourri of Texana the likes of which Henderson Shuffler, Jack McGuire, Kent Biffle, and others have written for the newspapers to entertain and inform us about our state. This one is divided into sections: The One State of Texas, and the states of East Texas, South Texas, North Texas, Central Texas, and West Texas. Each contains brief "sketches" of people, places, and events associated with that "state" that range from railroad nicknames to the Kelly plow to the Great Linnville Raid to the Dallas Ford plant to Lockhart's Lovely Library to Conan's Creater. Good on you, A.C.