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Book Notes

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BOOK NOTES

by Archie P. McDonald

One of our blessings is the abundance of books we receive for reviewing and noting. When ten or fifteen accumulate, we take sticky-pad in hand, spread them out on Mrs. Portia Gordon's work table, and make every effort to marry them off to appropriate reviewers. Sometimes that requires more than one attempt, but about ninety-five percent of those who agree to review a book do so and on time. You got to read the foregoing for two reasons: first, if you want to review a book, or more books, let us know, even asking for a particular book in which you are interested – if we have it or can get it, and you are first in line, it is yours to review; second, for many reasons some books are reviewed in this column. Some books are sent inscribed to the editor from old friends; such certainly deserve notice, though the editor prefers to leave as many reviewing opportunities to the paying customers as possible. Some books provide a useful bibliographic service but do not require actual reviews. And sometimes the editor just wants to say a word about a useful study. With that out of the way, here are notices of some new and useful books:

David Halberstam, *The Children* (Fawcett Books, The Ballentine Publishing Group, a division of Random House, 1998; Fawcett Edition, 1999), is the best examination of "The Movement," or the effort that began in the 1950s for equal rights for African Americans, that I have read. Halberstam was one of the first journalists to report on the Movement and did so while working for the *Nashville Banner*. "The Children" were members of a seminar on non-violent protest led by the Rev. Jim Lawson in the First Baptist Church, an African American Congregation in Nashville. They were students at four black colleges located in the city and earned that name from the Rev. Kelly Miller Smith, pastor of the church. They began the lunch counter sit-ins in Nashville, picked up the Freedom Rides in Birmingham after its CORE initiators had been beaten, and carried the torch until and after meaningful civil rights legislation had passed in Congress in 1964 and 1965. The stories of these "children" – as different as the triumph of Congressman John Lewis and the rise and fall of Mayor Marion Barry of Washington, D.C., are good history and good reporting. This is one of those books that should be read by everyone for the good of the soul.

Old Friend Bill O'Neal sent along his latest, *Reel Cowboys: Western Movie Stars Who Thrilled Young Fans And Helped them Grow Up Decent And Strong* (Eakin Press, P.O. Drawer 90159, Austin, Texas 78709-0159, \$16.95). This one is for advanced juvenile readers, meaning it is just about right for your editor. Divisions are: Silent Film Stars (Broncho Billy, Bill Hart, Hoot Gibson, Tom Mix, etc.); Stars of the 1930s and 1940s (Ken Maynard, Buck Jones, Tim McCoy, Bob Steele, Charles Starrett, The Three Mesquiteers, Wild Bill Elliott, etc.); Singing Cowboys (the one and only Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, leading ladies, side kicks, etc.); and Later Western Stars (Gary Cooper, Randolph Scott, Audie Murphy, Clint Eastwood ... and JOHN WAYNE). Lots of still pictures. If you are old enough, you will like it.

A Complete Guide To Hunter's Frontier Times (Eakin Press, P.O. Drawer 90159, Austin, Texas 78709-0159, \$21.95), compiled by James A. Browning and Janice B. McCavy, presents over 200 pages of bibliographic references to

all the articles that appeared in *Hunter's Frontier Times*, published in Bandera from October 1934 until October 1954. Articles are listed alphabetically by category, thusly: "'The Adams Diggings' by Charles A. Gianini. F.T. Vol. 12, #3, December 1934, p. 96."

The past few years have brought us a good many books on the Alamo, many of them focusing on the least Texan of all the fort's defenders, David Crockett. Comes now *The Davy Crockett Almanac and Book of Lists*, by William R. Chemerka (Eakin Press, P.O. Drawer 90159, Austin, Texas 78709-0159, \$17.95). Contents include an analysis of Crockett's autobiography and his role as a popular culture icon, his family tree, an exhaustive "A to Z" compendium, and then the lists: thirty-two of them on such subjects as Top Ten Crockett Books, Davy Crockett in the Movies, Comic Books, Crockett in School Books, etc. Suffice it to say this one contains more than most will want to know about Crockett.

The problem with *The History Highway 2000: A Guide To Internet Resources*, by Dennis A. Trinkle and Scott A Merriman (2nd ed., M.E. Sharpe, 80 Business Park Drive, Armonk, New York 10504, \$29.95 +\$5 s/h), is that a part of it was out of date before it was printed. Such is the nature of technology. But all of it is still useful. Out-of-date means that new sites are activated daily, but those listed here will, for the most part, remain indefinitely. To make sense of such rambling, what we have here is a good history of the Internet and its uses, which takes up about twenty-five pages; the remaining 400 pages contain descriptions of hundreds of WEB sites of interest to all fields of history. Here is an example from page 326: "Women Veterans <http://userpages.aug.com/captbarb/> 'Captain Critical' presents a large collection of online material on women in the military. The site documents the role of women in American wars from the Revolution through today's news."

Touched By Fire: Letters From Company D, 5th Texas Infantry, Hood's Texas Brigade, Army of Northern Virginia, 1862-1865, edited by Eddy R. Parker (Hill College Press, Hillsboro, Texas), is a collection of letters written by several members of this unit, the majority penned by J. Mark Smithers, who joined the army at age seventeen, worked his way up to sergeant's stripes, and sustained two wounds during the war. William H. Lewis and Robert M. Powell also wrote several of the letters. The collection provides personal insight into the various assignments of Hood's Texas Brigade, the state's most celebrated unit in the Civil War.

Lone Star Generals In Gray, by Ralph A. Wooster (Eakin Press, P.O. Drawer 90159, Austin, Texas 78709-0159, \$24.95) is reminiscent of Ezra Warner's *Generals In Gray and Generals In Blue* except it focuses on Confederate general officers associated with Texas and the biographical data is more complete and is annotated. Entries are accompanied by a photo of the subject and the note section and bibliography are extensive – as one would expect from Ralph Wooster, the dean of Civil War scholars in and of Texas. Chapter divisions compartmentalize Confederate Generals from Texas, The Army Generals – Albert Sidney Johnston and John Bell Hood, the Major Generals, Brigadiers of the Trans-Mississippi and Eastern Theatres, etc. This is a good addition to the growing shelf of Wooster's work.

The Papers of Jefferson Davis, Volume 10, October 1863-August 1864, Lynda Lasswell Crist, editor, Kenneth H. Williams, associate editor, and Peggy

L. Dillard, editorial associate (Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70803; \$95), continues a series begun nearly four decades ago by Frank E. Vandiver, Cooper Reagan, Haskell Monroe, and others, and it is still sponsored by The Jefferson Davis Association. Crist has been with the project longer than anyone save for Vandiver, who is still president of the JD Association and chief advisory editor among a distinguished list of other advisory editors, including James I. Robertson, Jr., who wrote an introduction for this volume. Long ago the editors decided to account for, but not necessarily reproduce, every Davis item extant about which they knew. So volume 10, like the preceding volumes, contains some complete letters – with annotation – and a calendar of other items. In both circumstances the archival location of the item is provided. This is one of the best “Papers Of...” projects in terms of careful editing and complete coverage of principal subject.

While we are dealing with the “Wah,” consider *The Confederate Cookbook: Family Favorites From The Sons of Confederate Veterans*, edited by Lynda Moreau (Pelican Publishing Company, Box 3110, Gretna, Louisiana 70054, \$25). The opening sections contain several commercials for the SCV; succeeding chapters present recipes contributed by members divided into appetizers and libations; salads, sauces, and breads; main dishes, soups, and stews, vegetables and side dishes; and sweets. A random sample: The Ultimate Chocolate Chip Cookies, submitted by Sidney J. Hullum, who is associated with the Johnson-Sayers-Nettles Camp #1012, of Teague, Texas. Hullum is a descendant of Pvt. Benjamin M. Hullum, and a member of Company L, 13th Tennessee Infantry. The recipe is presented in standard style: a listing of ingredients followed by instructions for the order of combination, procedure, and baking time—plus the advice to “Combine with a glass of cold milk for the perfect midnight snack.” Confederates lost the war but no true Southerner would admit to coming in second in the kitchen.

Wake Up Dead Man: Hard Labor and Southern Blues, collected and edited by Bruce Jackson (University of Georgia Press, Athens, Georgia 30602, \$16.95), was first published in 1972 and is back in print in this Brown Thasher Book edition. What you have here is a collection in the John Lomax tradition. It commences with a lengthy introduction of more than forty pages that identifies the singers and the Texas convict work song tradition, plus chapters on songs associated with Cotton And Cane (solo songs and group songs), the songs of J.B. Smith, Axe songs (crosscutting and logging), and flatweeding songs. What you usually get is an introduction to a song, musical bars for piano accompaniment with words to the first verse, and every known additional verse or variation.

Best Editorial Cartoons Of The Year, 2000 Edition, edited by Charles Brooks (Pelican Publishing Company, 1000 Burmaster Street, Gretna, LA 70053, \$14.95), is the twenty-eighth annual installment in a series that has captured our attention for at least half of that time. Included are 430 mostly satirical drawings by 160 political cartoons whose work usually greets us on the editorial pages of daily newspapers. Most of us chuckle over cartoons that offer balm to our own political perspectives and grimace at the work of the knuckleheads who use their talent and our subscription money to malign and misrepresent our side. The wonderful thing is that everyone gets to react this way because cartoonists, like other media types, butcher all sides of any issue.

The edition for 2000 does not focus as much on President Bill Clinton's impeachment problem (and the problem that produced it) as did the edition for 1999, but some of it lingers. What is remarkable is that Clinton is always presented as over-weight, but in reality he is about as angular as Presidents Bush, Reagan, and Carter and is more so than say Newt Gingrich or Dick Armey. We see here the first appearance of hopeful George W. Bush and far more focus on Albert Gore than before. Mrs. Clinton's Senate race gets attention, as does the Republican Party's opposition. Favorites in this edition are funerary tributes, especially for Joe DiMaggio and John F. Kennedy, Jr. But my favorite, by J.R. Rose of Byrd Newspapers, appears on page 197. The first of its three panels shows a man on a beach approaching a conch shell. A balloon reveals his thoughts: "Aaahhh ... There's nothing like a stroll on the beach to get your mind off the fast-paced technology of today..." Second panel: he picks up the shell. Third panel: he has the shell to his ear, and it says..."If you'd like to hear the Atlantic Ocean, press 'one,' if you'd like to hear the Pacific ocean, press 'two'..." That speaks volumes.

The Gentleman From Georgia: The Biography of Newt Gingrich, by Mel Steely (Mercer University Press, 6316 Peake Road, Macon, Georgia 31210, \$29.95), is a whitewash of the career of the gentleman from Georgia through his twenty-year career in Congress. Steely taught history with Gingrich at West Georgia College, located in Carrollton, and worked as a volunteer in Gingrich's early campaigns for election to Congress and as a staff member after he won on the third try. To say Steely is biased begs the point, but at least he does not try to mask his partisanship. He cannot help admitting that Gingrich's sometimes abrasive personality caused personal and political trouble, but essentially the viewpoint is that Gingrich was always "right" on everything. It is easy to agree that Gingrich was a powerful force and the motivation behind the Republican Revolution that gained control of the Congress, especially the House, in 1994, or that his personality then proved to be an impediment to what he wanted the Congress to achieve in dismantling what he called our nation's welfare state. There is no balance here: all the sleaze was in the Clinton White House, but Gingrich's marital infidelity takes up less than half of one sentence. Defending his boss, Steely says that Speaker Gingrich taught his famous tele-course to counter the liberal history taught by nearly all other historians because he knew that historians can tell it any way they wish. His example was Thomas Jefferson, who could be viewed as a gifted political theorist, essayist, inventor, and statesman, or as an evil slave owner. Steely's treatment of the gentleman from Georgia is exhibit one that historians can tell the story to suit themselves. Readers on the right will relish every page, those on the left will gag a lot, and those in the center will yet wonder about the real story of the gentleman from Georgia.

Inside The Barracks: World War II Humor, compiled and edited by Walbrook D. Swank (Burd Street Press, 63 West Burd Street, Shippensburg, Pennsylvania 17257, \$5.95), contains thirty-nine pages of poetry, shuck, and imaginative correspondence, all of it scatological and prurient, with some relevance to the WWII era. About all I can quote here are these lines from a letter allegedly written by a serviceman in the Pacific Theater describing his initial encounter with combat: "I started to shake with patriotism" and "I tried to hide behind a tree but there weren't enough trees for officers" (p.4).

A happy remembrance is Jim H. Ainsworth's *Biscuits Across The Brazos: A Family Journey* (Season of Harvest Publications, Across The Creek @ Bar Nun Ranch, Campbell, Texas 75422), a limited (300copies) printing of the story of a wagon trail drive that is remarkable for two reasons: first, the drive moved from west to east; and second, it happened in 1998. Both are explained this way: Ainsworth and companions duplicated the movement of his great-grandparents from Baird, in Callahan County, to Delta County in East Texas. The motivation was two preserved biscuits, heirloom testimony to the family separation during the migration, and Ainsworth's determination to learn what his forebearers had experienced in a different time. Along the way Ainsworth made a host of new friends who actually and vicariously participated in his nostalgic trip. This is fun reading.

Not so much fun, because of the subject, but quite important, is the republication of Dan T. Carter's *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, The Origins Of The New Conservatism, And The Transformation of American Politics* (Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70803, \$17.95). First published in 1995, this edition (2000) contains a new preface in which Carter stated that his views on Wallace had not changed fundamentally since the first publication. Those views: George Wallace brought a towering ambition to succeed in politics from his beginnings in hard-scrabble Alabama. Early success as a judge and legislator whetted his appetite for the governor's office and then the presidency, and nothing was beneath him to achieve his goals until a would-be assassin's bullet more or less put an end to the final ambition. Certainly he used the race issue to gain office in Alabama and in attempting to achieve national office, all the while maintaining that his motive was the preservation of state's rights. Carter argues that Wallace anticipated the swing to conservatism in the South and in the nation, especially among blue-collar workers, and forced Richard Nixon to the right to win the presidency in 1968 and keep it in 1972. Wallace survived an assassination attempt but spent his remaining two decades in physical misery, and, if his attempt to seek forgiveness from blacks was genuine, in some mental or spiritual distress as well. Carter's biography humanizes Wallace, explains him, even, and reminds contemporaries of the reality of the 1950s and 1960s in the South. It does not make Wallace a sympathetic character, but it does help us understand him and the shift among some Americans toward conservatism that his quests for the presidency produced.

Stanley Marcus From A to Z: Viewpoints Volume II, edited by Michael V. Hazel (University of North Texas Press, Box 311336, Denton, TX 76203-1336, \$24.95) follows the publication in 1995 of *The Viewpoints of Stanley Marcus*. That volume, like this one, contains columns written by Marcus for the *Dallas Morning News*. The first volume contained 116 articles; this one reproduces 114 of them (if I counted correctly), in sixty-two categories ... from A to Z, or "Advice" to "Zoos," plus an epilogue which explains why Marcus has become an "occasional" contributor instead of an once-a-week contributor. I read some of these columns in the original, and, taking Mr. Marcus at his word, it would please him that I did not always agree with his viewpoint. But I am delighted that he has written them and will continue to do so occasionally. Such a mind deserves a venue for its yield.

Finally, a visit with an old friend. I read Leon Hale's *Turn South at the Second Bridge* (Winedale Publishing, P.O. Box 130828, Houston, Texas 77219, \$16.00) in 1965, missed the first reprint 1980, but enjoyed this third edition as much as the first time. Surely, there is some "dating" in the text – marveling at a high cost of a haircut in Houston at \$1.75 is a good example – but most of it is timeless. I couldn't burst out laughing when reading about Welcome Woods' distress when his Model A was pushed from behind because I was in the waiting room of a professional office at the time and didn't want to attract stares. But it was just as funny. Hale has a gift of making a reader "see" what he is writing about, especially if one knows the kinds of citizens and situations he portrays. I have enjoyed all of Hale's books, but this remains my favorite. I have used a line from it in final examinations for graduate students for years. I ask what Uncle Charlie Jones meant when he observed that "The lightbread people have ruined our women" (p.173). It is a sign of the times that for thirty-five years all have filtered that through the civil rights struggle, rather than what Jones intended: that because women could go to the store and buy bread and no longer had to stay home and bake it, that the whole world changed. I'd say for the better, but Uncle Charlie didn't think so.