Notices and Notes

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NOTICES

The award-winning Deep South Conference series’ sixth international and multidisciplinary conference, sponsored by Louisiana State University, Shreveport, will focus on “Thomas Jefferson: Life, Times, and Legacy.” The conference will be held on the LSU-S campus on October 16-18, 2003, during the bicentennial of the Louisiana Purchase. The selection committee invites proposals for papers and panels. For additional information, contact Dr. Bill Pederson, American Studies Chair, International Lincoln Center, LSU in Shreveport, One University Place, Shreveport, LA 71115-2301. FAX: 318-795-4203. Phone: 318-797-5349. Email: wpederso@pilot.lsu.edu.

NOTES

Robert Flynn’s Growing Up A Sullen Baptist And Other Lies (University of North Texas Press, P.O. Box 311336, Denton, TX 76203. $21.95) confuses me. This book is a collection of previously published essays divided into three sections: Baptist, Growing Up, and Sullen. “Baptist” is much the more fun of the three. I heard Flynn read one of these essays on the Baptists, Methodists, and Church of Chisters in Chillicothe at a meeting of the West Texas Historical Association, and it was the funniest thing I ever heard. This section includes a dialogue essay with Joyce Roach about the relative demerits of Chillicothe and Jacksboro that is fun. “Growing Up” is less fun but instructive: it includes some of Flynn’s biblical analysis against the backdrop of Southern history and experiences as a reporter in Vietnam. “Sullen” is no fun at all, but his account of visits to India and Cambodia are worth reading. They are good reporting. The final essay, “John Wayne Must Die,” irritates me. It gives too much credit and blame for American attitudes to an entertainer. I am saddened that an interesting read ends on a sour note.

The Texas Almanac, 2002-2003 (The Dallas Morning News, Box 655237, Dallas, TX 75265. $19.95), has made its appearance, again edited by Mary G. Ramos with Robert Plocheck as associate editor. In addition to the usual, and valuable, statistics we rely on, there are special features on the Natural Beauty of Texas, Historic Government Documents, Crime, Health and Science, and under History, sections on LaSalle’s Colony, Origins of Camino Real, Red River Boundary Settled, and a Brief Sketch of Texas History. Next to the New Handbook of Texas, this is the most useful collection of data on Texas, its history and otherwise. Every researcher or even those with less professional interest in Texas need a copy.

Galveston: A History and a Guide, by David G. McComb (Texas State Historical Association, 2.306 Sid Richardson Hall, University of Texas, Austin, TX 78712-9820. $7.95), is the eighteenth monograph in the Fred Rider Cotton Popular History Series. This series was proposed by the late F. Lee
Lawrence more than twenty years ago, for, said Lee, readers who wanted to know more about a place or event but not read a “big ole’ book” about it. David McComb's *Galveston* fits Lee’s prescription nicely. It contains fifty-one pages of text divided into sections on The Port City, The Sin City, and The Tourist City. Probably the middle part demanded extra research—actually it is pretty mild and mostly deals with crime. McComb is the authority on Galveston, so TSHA has brought subject and author together appropriately, and the yield is well worth while.

“In 1915, President Wilson designated what holiday to fall on the second Sunday in May?” (p.38) What ... politician from Texas often used the biblical phrase, “Let us reason together?” (p.205) You probably know the answers are Mother’s Day and LBJ, but there are lots of questions in J. Stephen Lang’s *The Complete Book of Presidential Trivia* (Pelican Publishing Co., 1000 Burmaster, Gretna, LA 70053. $17.95), that will force you to sneak a peak at the answers, which are located conveniently with each section of questions. Chapter topics that mostly explain what kind of questions are posed in them include Presidential Potpourri; Mixing and Mingling (flings and clubs); Quote, Unquote; Family Ties, Before They Were Presidents; The Man In Private; Campaigns, Victories, Defeats; Cabinet, Congress, Court; The Political Life; Events, Earth-shaking and Trivial; First Ladies; Domestic Tranquility: Home Life; Remembering the Presidents; and Twenty Questions (About Each). Try this one from page 281: “Who Was President When ... King George III of England died?” Told you. Would you believe it was James Monroe?

Joe E. Ericson’s *The Nacogdoches Story: An Informal History* (Heritage Books, 1540E Pointer Ridge Place, Bowie, MD 20716. $31.50), is a handy paperbound history on the community that claims to be the oldest town in Texas. In organization and style it is similar to *Nacogdoches: The History of Texas’ Oldest City*, published by Best of East Texas Publishers in 1995 and “sold out,” no longer in print. Joe’s partners in that venture included Carolyn Ericson, James G. Partin, and yours truly. Joe decided that “sold out” meant there was still a hunger and thirst for the history of Nacogdoches, so he provides this offering for the famishing. It also advances beyond of the coverage period of the previous publication.

Carol Padgett’s *Keeping Hearth & Home in Old Texas: A Practical Primer For Daily Living* (Menasha Ridge Press, Box 43673, Birmingham, AL 35243. $13.95), is a rule-and-guide for living. The advice might seem dated to some, but it still has value. For example, “A set time for each member of the family to take a weekly bath will tend to promote the convenience of the household” (p.5). Seems as accurate in 2002 as at any time in the nineteenth century, the period the book describes. What we have here is lots of good advice for women on how to keep themselves well groomed, how to behave when courted, and what to cook and entertain, how to mourn properly, and much other advice essential to a well ordered life. Padgett also provides recipes, which will be the highlight of the book for the few women who still cook.

I Remember ... Personal Reflections on Greenville and Hunt County, Texas, (printed by Henington Pub. Co., Wolfe City, Texas), contains the recollections of ninety-seven-year-old Paul Mathews, a life-long resident of Hunt County. Mathews attended Burleson College and the University of Texas before turning to Greenville and a career in banking, the board of education, the Rotary Club, bird hunting, and golf. It is personal, but also insightful into the life Mathews lived for near a century in one place. I Remember ... is beautifully illustrated.

The star-struck among us (and who isn’t, truth told), will enjoy Marty Jurow Seein’ Stars: A Show Biz Odyssey, by Martin Jurow as told to Philip Wuntch (SMU Press, Box 750415, Dallas, TX 75275-0415. $35.00) It is, obviously, a memoir by one of the film industry’s leading twentieth-century producers. Jurow, now retired, lives in Dallas; Wuntch has served as film critic (a dream job) for The Dallas Morning News since 1974. Jurow doesn’t exactly “tell all” – thank the Lord – but he does tell much of his relationship with such moguls as J.L. Warner and actors/actresses Katherine Hepburn, Frank Sinatra, Marlon Brando, Elvis, Jack Lemmon ... and many others. Jurow produced such major motion pictures as “Breakfast at Tiffany’s” (1960), “The Pink Panther” (1962), and most appropriate for Texas, “Terms of Endearment” and “Waltz Across Texas” (1982-1983). Following retirement from film producing, Jurow served as a distinguished visiting professor at SMU. Contains photos, some posed, some candid, of movie stars and production folk. Many are signed “to Marty.” My only gripe is the two-column format; otherwise, this is an engaging account of Jurow’s life in the film industry.

The Big Lie: Hale Boggs, Lucille May Grace, and Leander Perez in 1951, by Garry Boulard (Pelican Pub. Co, 1000 Burnmaster St. Gretna, LA 70054. $17.95), and Texas Politicians Good ‘n’ Rad, by Mona D. Sizer (Republic of Texas Press, Wordware Pub. Co., 2320 Los Rios Blvd, Plano, TX 75074. $18.95) have much in common. Both contain biographical material on leading mid-twentieth-century political figures in their states. Sizer’s series includes primarily Governors James E. and Miriam Amanda Ferguson, George Parr,
LBJ, Governors James S. Hogg and Ross Sterling, and Senator Joseph Weldon Bailey, with secondary coverage of Governors James Allred, Allan Shivers, and President Bush the Elder. Boulard’s lineup focuses on those identified in the title plus Governor Earl K. Long, with older brother Huey P. Long, as he always is, the crucible of political life in Louisiana in that era. The books favor in concentration on persons that some might consider unsavory characters – Perez and Parr are obvious, but partisans easily could shade in the rest of the roster. Both could have benefited from better editing, Texas’ entry more. Typos are one thing; when one leads to a misreported outcome of an election it is more grievous. Boulard’s book deals with Perez’s accusation of Boggs’ flirtation with communism while a student at Tulane in the 1930s, through his stand-in, Lucille Mae Grace. Boggs and Grace were leading candidates in a race for the governorship. What I liked was the way Boulard set up the premise, then chased rabbits throughout the life and careers of all three principles with that gadfly of all gadfly’s, Uncle Earl Long, stepping in and messing up as he pleased. I loved Long’s “defence” of Boggs, which “helped” him lose north Louisiana and the election: “Hale Boggs ain’t no Communist. He’s too good a Catholic to be a Communist.” In biased, Protestant north Louisiana, Long knew, one label was as bad as the other. Bottom line: Boggs comes across as do-gooder with a lovely wife and family who fell just short of the power he wanted, and Lucille Mae Grace a nice lady duped and dumped by Perez, the embodiment of evil – and boss of politics in Louisiana and elsewhere. Sizer’s Texas biographies lack the depth or dash of their Louisiana opposites. And I think a little more highly of some of them than is presented here.

First Of A Kind: The Building Of The South’s First Newsprint Mill, by Bob Bowman (Best of East Texas Publishers, 515 South First St., PO Box 1647, Lufkin, TX 75902), is the latest work from the pen of our prolific friend from Across the Angelina. And his best. This is the story of the founding and maturing of “the paper mill,” as it is always called in central East Texas, whether in its Southland, St. Regis, Champion, or – currently – Abitibi incarnations. “The paper mill” was the first of its kind in East Texas, and its father-founder, Ernest Kurth, played a central role in solving the mystery of how to make acceptable newsprint from the gummy pines that grew in the region. Kurth was not among the chemists – they were Georgian Dr. Charles H. Herty and several on-the-job geniuses – but he provided the push and the business acumen to see the project through to completion against considerable odds. The region had the resource, and the need. What it lacked was the know-how to use its abundant pine trees. Kurth, Herty, and the rest solved the riddle and gave us a major industry. Bowman has wanted to tell this story since he worked as Southland’s public relations manager from 1966 to 1982. He has an intimate knowledge of the mill’s origins, development, and business ups-and-downs, and is the best possible person to tell it. Favorite anecdote: how Kurth managed to have Lufkin’s Daily News run the first newsprint, even though it had been promised to the Dealeys for Dallas Morning News. Read the book and learn more about these interesting entrepreneurs and their “paper mill.”
Shadow Of Dixie, by Augustus B. Cochran III (University Press of Kansas, 2501 West 15th, Lawrence, KS 66049. $29.95), is stated thusly: “My argument in this book is that our national political, and especially electoral, institutions, for all sorts of complicated and interrelated reasons, are coming increasingly to resemble the irrational and undemocratic politics of the old Solid South” (p. 2). Cochran wants us to know, and says so quite plainly, that he is of the South, born, raised, educated, teaches, and practices law in the South. This, lest someone think that his presentation of politics in the Solid South, which is post-Reconstruction through the return of Republicanism — roughly 1870s until the GOP returned as a force to be reckoned with in the 1970s and 1980s — too negative. What he is talking about is a century of government by a small, white, elite for their benefit. Despite obvious changes in the South’s economy and that it is now the most racially integrated section of the nation — an original Republican goal — the remainder of the nation now operates more like the Solid South than the other way around since the Contract With America revolutionized national politics in 1994. I think that pretty obvious. Now, whether one agrees with this or not depends, as usual, on one’s politics.

By The Muddy Angelina: Stories & Musical Wanderings in Search of the Old Pioneer Spirit of East Texas, by Steve Hartz (Mystery Ridge Pub. Co., 216 East Pillar, Nacogdoches, TX 75961), pursues, and pretty well captures, the musical heritage of “old time” East Texas. Fittingly, the preparer is Steve Hartz, proprietor of the Oldtime String Shop, which is located “on the square” in Nacogdoches. Hartz opened his shop in 1978, a short spell ago as Nacogdoches measures time, but sufficient for both man and business to become traditions — legends, even — in the downtown area. A fair Saturday afternoon will find Steve and friends sitting outside the store picking and singing the real old-time music. On the business side, Steve repairs and restores string instruments for the famous and for those who want to be. And in the interest of fair disclosure, he once ordered a custom-made guitar case for me that proved a perfect fit for my odd-shaped guitar. I wish he could have as easily made me a better picker. That aside, anyone interested in the “oldtime” music will find joy in this little book, because, first, it features an engaging essay on Steve’s interest in the music, and then discussions of various songs, all written or arranged by Steve, that narrate the history of East Texas. Second, the book comes with a CD that demonstrates for the ear what the eye reads. That, of course, is the point: music must be heard.