

Books in Review

# 'Rice Paddy Debates,' Sid Finister Offer Unusual Reading in 'Class'

by JOY BRIDGES

**What Really Happened to the Class of '65?** by Michael Medved and David Wallechinsky

In 1965, *Time* magazine did a story on the graduating seniors of Palesades High School in Los Angeles. The class was selected as an example of American youth with a golden future. The children of affluence were supposed to have the best of everything. At the time, no one could have imagined the upheavals in the lives of the students of that school, and in the rest of the United States.

Ten years after this *Time* story, Michael Medved and David Wallechinsky interviewed thirty members of that same class, and sought to find out what had happened to them and how they had changed.

There were a lot of surprises: the quarterback of the football team had become a Hollywood masseur; the high school gang leader had built a million-dollar clothing business; the head cheerleader had become a professor of women's studies at a college; the intellectual had become a John Bircher who had run for Congress; and, the handsome boy who had been voted "most popular" had committed suicide.

The authors used oral history techniques to get a feel for the way these people were, the way they were seen

by others, and the way they had changed into what they were today. They interviewed members of the class; each person talked about themselves and also gave their opinions about the people with whom they had gone to school.

One of the most interesting studies was that of one of the authors, Michael Medved. In high school, Michael was famous for the "Great Rice Paddy Debate." He took the position that the football field should be planted with rice. Football, he felt, costs the student body money, whereas a rice paddy would earn money for the benefit of all the students. After high school, he attended college at Yale. He graduated from that university with honors, and then proceeded to work as a speechwriter and consultant. Medved was in the crowd at the Ambassador Hotel when Bobby Kennedy was shot. This trauma committed him to liberal politics, and he worked on many different campaigns.

When he tired of politics, he went back to his literary interests. He began to read a great deal about Judaism in the meantime. His parents were Jewish, but they thought of themselves as "free-thinkers." He taught in a Jewish parochial school in order to avoid the draft. All this exposure to the values and practices of his Jewish forefathers impressed him and became a large part of him. He married a Jewish girl and for him, the last ten years were a journey back to his roots. Consequently, he

came to believe that in a rootless generation, this was the greatest gift he could have received from life.

Dave Wallechinsky, the other co-author, was known as David Wallace in high school. He was the son of novelists Sylvia and Irving Wallace. At Palesades High, he was the classic underachiever, known mainly for playing cards and shooting pool. He won four hundred dollars playing poker during school hours alone.

With a great deal of creativity, Dave made up a fictional student named Sid Finister and enrolled him in several classes. Dave and his friends look tests for him, and answered the roll call for him also. In later years, a number of people took out a telephone in Sid's name. Unfortunately, Sid never paid his phone bills, so he ran afoul with the telephone company.

After graduation, David drifted and became involved in the hippie movement which had geared up in the early 1960's. He took mescaline and had strange reactions to it. Under its influence, he felt a great deal of respect for Lyndon Johnson. This fact alone made him fear for his sanity. As a consequence, Dave drifted, getting involved, to one degree or another, with most of the experiences in the 1960's. Finally, he settled into writing as a career. In addition to *What Really Happened to the Class of '65?*, he also co-authored *The People's Almanac*.

After writing *What Really Happened to the Class of '65?*, the authors arranged a ten-year reunion for the class. It was a great success and many in the class were able to come. One of the most gratifying results of the reunion, however, was the realization that most of the people were much more accepting of the differences in people than they had been in high school. Maturity had given them more self-confidence, and the security to accept differing views.

Pauline Pratt

# Death Strikes at Magnolia Hill

In Our Last Episode:

When last we left the residents of Magnolia Hill, Stella and bridal company were at mid-altar, her potted poinsettia swaying in the breeze. However, attention was not focused on the nuptials but rather on a figure in the back of the church who had interrupted the ceremony. The man's revelations not only threw the services into a frenzy but completely changed Stella's life. The man: Harold Finkk. His story was one of unrequited passion told to a captive Free Will Pentecostal Orthodox Church audience. He told of his adolescently-awkward love affair with the former Pauline Grunch (now Pauline Pratt): "Pauline was the most beautiful woman I ever laid eyes on. Why, when she used to come over to Daddy's feed store after school, we'd have the best time drinking our orange pop and playing footsies in the peanut pile. (As you will undoubtedly recall, Harold's father was owner of Finkk's Feed Store, Inc.) It was always Pauline's toes that overheated my engine. But one passionate moment behind the No-Grow Weed, Ant, and Praying Mantis killer display, our toes interlocked, and so did our hearts. I didn't see Pauline for nigh-on nine months, until one day she dropped by the store with a little goober in her arms. Why, it was the ugliest little thing I'd ever seen: Stringy hair, inch-thick glasses, big lips, with a Magnolia Hill College tee-shirt reading "Blossoms or bust!" on the front, on. Yet I fell in love with that young-un. And I have continued to love you, Stella, and I can't let you go through with this wedding not ever knowing the truth. You see, Stella, I am your father, not Barney."

A gasp spread throughout the church as this long hidden secret was revealed. Bobby huddled in a corner moaned: "No one will come to the reception now. What ever will we do with five gross of petit fours?" Almost at the same time, Flora Lou Belle shouted: "I knew it from the very beginning. Both Pauline and Stella take a second rinse to get all of the shampoo out." From the far side of the church, a different reaction to the news was taking place. Bombarded by this string of shocking revelations, P. Dexter's heart just couldn't take anymore. However, all eyes were focused on the back of the church so no one noticed P. Dexter's struggle to palpitate. The reaction of Pauline, though, was the most vivid of all. Rising to the occasion, she flung open her bulging pocketbook stuffed with imported Dreama Creama Cream puffs and began hurling them at the accusing onlookers. "Wipe that holier-than-thou look off your face, you nasty Namibian coastal shrimp," Pauline was heard to say to one of the be-tuxed pygmies. And, to Bertha Bartalski,

(parliamentarian of the Magnolia Hill Missionary Society and president of the local 'Search for Yesterday' fan club), Pauline shrieked: "Don't look at me like that, you self-righteous bag and local missionary fund embezzler."

Admist all the furor, Harold continued his saga: "You see, Stella, I couldn't claim you because no future feed store magnate could possibly maintain the respect of the community, much less his peanut peddling license, under the shadow of such a scandal as this would have caused. So, one night while driving to New Rurubomba to the drive-in, we passed through Magnolia Hill. Your mother, well, she just couldn't wait any longer, so we stopped off at one of the buildings on campus for her to tinkly-wink. She was so relieved . . . to find the perfect surroundings for her daughter's upbringing, that she decided to leave you in the lavatory. We both knew you would get the best of care, what with quality Charmin in such abundance in the bathroom."

At that moment, Barney broke into tumultuous tears, recalling the night, long ago, when he had discovered Stella wrapped in layers of kush (alias tissue), and crying in the basement lavatory. At the sight of Barney's tears, Stella, who had been languishing over the story

of her rejection, fainted. As all of the wedding guests gathered around Stella to revive her, Barney recognized that P. Dexter had taken what would be his final tumble. Once Stella was revived, she was immediately confronted with the even more devastating fact of P. Dexter's sudden demise.

In a maniacal frenzy, she dashed out of the church, and back to home and hearth in the basement bathroom in the Administration Building where she had spent many happy moments as a child. With both guilt and humiliation weighing heavy upon her, a distraught Stella planned her future admist Charmin and liquid plumber, leaving Mike Machonelli weeping uncontrolably in the arms and/or bosom of a Namibian coastal shrimp. (alias pygmie).

What future plans does Stella ponder?

Will Pauline now change her name back to Grunch?

How many rinses will it take Flora Lou to get the cream-puffs out of her hair?

Find out the answers to these and other important questions as you continue to follow the newspaper serial of Pauline Pratt, Pauline Pratt.

# Watson Reveals Holmes' Secret Addiction in 'Solution'

by JONATHAN RIDDLE

NBC's Gene Shalit called it "one hundred per-cent entertainment", and after seeing *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution*, one cannot help but agree. Based on the best-selling novel by the same name, the film combines humor, psychology, and adventure to both dazzle the eye and tantalize the mind. Because of its practically flawless quality, *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution* smells of a classic.

All too often when books are made into movies they lose something in the transition. This cannot be said of *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution*, for the movie truly captures the feeling of Nicholas Meyer's book. (Perhaps Meyer's writing of the screenplay helped.) Set up as the memoirs of John H. Watson as edited by Nicholas Meyer, the book is a narrative of Watson's attempts to cure his protege Sherlock Holmes' addiction to cocaine, (who took a seven per-cent solution of the drug every day). The whole affair is based upon Meyer's contention that Watson had covered up this very sordid episode in Holmes' life and that Meyer had discovered the truth in Watson's lost memoirs, ("only the facts are made up", of course). At any rate, Watson gets Holmes to dash off to Vienna by tricking him into thinking his arch-enemy Professor Moriarity has left for the continent. Little does Holmes know that he is going to see Sigmund Freud who has agreed to help him through withdrawal. The fun really starts when these two meet.

Obviously the story of *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution* itself would be enough to entertain. But the actors themselves are what make the story come alive — and there is hardly a weak actor in the cast. Nicol Williamson as Holmes, Robert Duvall as Watson, and Alan Arkin as Freud are absolutely scintillating. Neither one of them really stands apart from the rest, (though each could if need be), but rather they act as a team; just as the characters they portray, each learns something from the other. Vanessa Redgrave as Lola Devereaux reflects all the style and quiet grace of the character she portrays, while the supporting cast with such standouts as Sir Laurence Olivier, Joel Grey, and Samantha Eggar, contributes immeasurably to the whole flavor of the film.

Production and direction are also excellent. Sets and costumes of the period, camera angles and special effects, (especially in Holmes' withdrawal from addiction), show immense technical talent and imagination. Certain scenes are especially memorable — Holmes childhood experience the ride on the "Orient Express", the concluding scene on the Danube. The music is also rather effective, though overpowering at times. Some would say it is too dramatic, particularly near the beginning, but in this writer's opinion it seems to add to the feeling of suspense and adventure that is so dominant throughout the movie. *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution* is, therefore, one of the best films of the season. In a year where mediocrity is the norm it is refreshingly unique and entertaining.

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