

BOOKS

Kennedy Through Sidey And Time

JOHN F. KENNEDY, PRESIDENT. By Hugh Sidey. Atheneum. 400 Pages. \$6.95.

By W. H. SCARBOROUGH

The name Kennedy has assumed all the qualities and then some of the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval—drop it and it can shatter sales records for anything from coloring books to phonograph parodies.

The latest field to discover this simple, useful little fact is the historical book trade; the latest entry in these lists is a fat little tome by Time Washington reporter Hugh Sidey, a bright young man who has been following the President around since 1958 when the junior Senator from Massachusetts began making suspicious candidate-like sounds in the back of his throat.

Mr. Sidey has attempted at some length to do a number of things no one ever bothered to say couldn't be done. For one he has attempted to narrate the history of a Presidential term while it has a year yet to run; for another he has attempted to transmute Time's imitable prose and "depth" reporting into something more durable than the mildew on last week's issue.

What Mr. Sidey does contrive to prove is that a weekly news magazine and its reporters do accumulate a fantastic amount of detail—detail that is often very readable immediately after the fact but scarcely relevant to history. There is a school of history and of archaeology that reconstructs civilization from gossip letters and fragments of discarded soap suds, but it would seem hazardous for any society itself to hoard its own refuse in an archive and therefrom take its image. It would be a bit too harsh to suggest that Mr. Sidey is doing any such thing, but his type could evolve to that point. It would be more apt to call him a sort of journalistic packrat, incapable of distinguishing between the tinsel and broken glass and the diamonds in his burrow.

All this notwithstanding, "John F. Kennedy, President" is a comprehensive journal of Mr. Kennedy the man as President during three years of his first term. Mr. Sidey states in his introduction that he has written a narrative from which the interpretation is essentially inseparable.

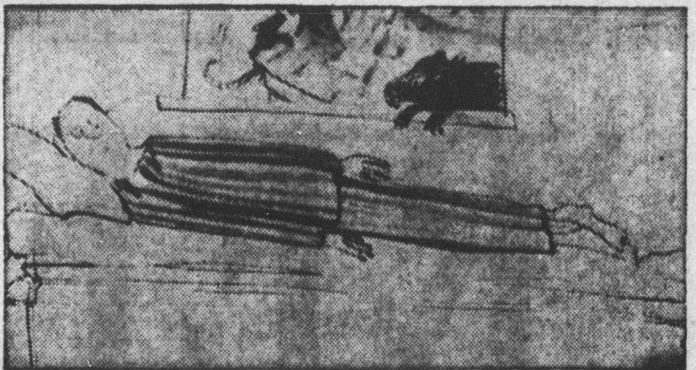


HUGH SIDEY

able. What is intended as a means of making his work unique is the point of view, which most often appears to be somewhere immediately behind Mr. Kennedy's right shoulder. A safe vantage point if one were to maintain it, but Mr. Sidey wanders away at points into such things as a reconstructed interior monologue of Joseph P. Kennedy as he digs out his formal dress for the inauguration of his son. Or the not-exactly-gripping agencies Attorney General Robert Kennedy underwent in deciding to accept his brother's offer to be Attorney General.

Then, too, there are grand historical moments—the confrontation of Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Khrushchev in Vienna, caught in detail but with lamentably little selectivity. The maturation of a President through ordeal by action too often appears to be a commonplace event, a series of eminently mundane human actions and responses that are vital to the rest of the world. Even with this burden of importance Mr. Sidey fails to imbue his narrative with the drama it needs for emphasis. And there are gaps of fact left by Mr. Sidey's singular point of view, gaps filled by the daily newspapers much better.

This is not at all aimed at casting a pall on the glamour of John F. Kennedy's presidency. More accurately it is to indicate to Mr. Sidey the essential differences between writing for Time and writing for the ages.



Drawing For 'Weekend Guests'

One Weekend That Should Get Lost

WEEKEND GUESTS. By William K. Zinsser, illustrations by James Stevenson. Harper & Row. 52 Pages. \$3.95.

You wonder what ominously hovering unpaid bill palled the life of William Zinsser until he buckled under the strain and perpetrated this glutinous little pot-boiler. Mr. Zinsser is a New York free-lance writer who has published with impunity in the Saturday Evening Post, and also in Life, Horizon, Esquire, McCall's, and elsewhere. "Weekend Guests" must be a reprint from elsewhere. Even the New York Herald Tribune, for which Mr. Zinsser once wrote criticism and editorials, and which is rivaled for typographical inaccuracies only by the New York Times, would be all but hoisting itself on its own petard to claim this massive typographical error as an egg of its own laying.

"Weekend Guests" tells you all about weekend social life among the peri-Manhattan commuter set. It tells you in no uncertain terms. It tells you what is wrong with guests, and what is wrong with hosts. It tells you alphabetically, to make sure you get all the symptoms of guestritis in the right order. It starts with A ("Arriving Friday P.M. is the message on the postcard that arrives Friday A.M."). Then it goes on to B ("Breakfast is a meal which never ends"). Then it goes . . .

By the time you get to G ("Glop comes in a plastic bottle and goes with the weekend guest to the beach . . .") you are suddenly struck by the fact that the

initial letters of each of this large, thin, jaundice-jacketed, three-dollar-and-ninety-five-cent book's 26 pages of text run in alphabetical order. The realization comes as rather a shock. Mr. Zinsser, like the faithful hound who smells smoke, must be trying to tell us something.

So you wade through all the remaining 19 pages of glop; about guests and sailing, guests and their hosts' tastes in interior decoration, guests and country entertainment, boring guests, sleepless guests, guests and their hosts' children, guests and sports, guests and food, guests and practically everything including X ("X-ray is the only clear picture the guest retains of his skiing weekend"). Reaching the end of the book is like finishing a faintly disturbing meal and then discovering that it was liberally dosed with a spice to which you are allergic.

One of the cleverest ways to be clever is to tell people things they already know in prickling terms they would never have thought of themselves, like an Oscar Wilde epigram. But it is a tricky way to be clever, because if you make the terms as familiar as the message they deliver the whole thing becomes sort of gangrenous.

James Stevenson's drawings are worth looking at. Some are funny, some are charming, some are viciously cutting. For Mr. Stevenson, the children might enjoy "Weekend Guests." But not for Mr. Zinsser. Color him dull. —JACD

A Filibustering Comet Incredible William Walker

THE WORLD AND WILLIAM WALKER. By Albert Z. Carr. Harper & Row. 289 Pages.

By MARTHA ADAMS

This title in the 1960's sounds a bit pretentious. Who was William Walker, anyway? In the 1850's when Walker's name and exploits kept the American public on the edge of its seat for weeks on end it would have sounded less so.

Walker was one of a breed of 19th century Americans known as the "filibusters." The "filibusters," spurred by various motives, made a profession of leading expeditions of American adventurers into the underdeveloped parts of the world, particularly Latin America, for the purpose openly taking them over, establishing diplomatic claims or imposing a certain policy. Behind them, at various times, stood the United States government, Southern slave-holding interests, business, the nascent robber barons, idealists and fanatics of American expansion, and local revolutionaries.

The object of Walker's ambition was Nicaragua, a strip of Central America which, in the absence of the Panama Canal, offered the shortest and easiest route to the newly discovered gold fields of California and was hotly contested by nations and business empires alike.

Walker had a lightning career. He first set foot in Nicaragua in 1855 at the head of 58 men recruited from the rootless population of San Francisco. Within the year he became undisputed master of the country, created a government and brought it down again. In 1856, he was president himself in defiance of the American government and high finance, the British Empire, and a coalition of Central American states. His name bulked large in the American press and his men were christened "the Immortals."

Four years later, at the age of 36, he faced a Honduran firing squad and oblivion. A look at author Carr's list of previous works shows that he has a penchant for men of power and dynamics. His subjects include Napoleon, Stalin, and John D. Rockefeller, and a general study of dictatorship. Walker, on a smaller scale, is no exception to the list. He was a man of intense personality and leadership ability despite his unassuming appearance and it would seem he was

endowed also with a healthy dose of charisma. Extremely ascetic in his personal habits, he was above all a man bound to an ideal and a dream.

The dream was the creation of a Central American Federation of Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, Salvador, and Costa Rica based on the principles of American democracy and developed economically through American aid. The liberal revolutionaries of Central America shared at least the first part of this dream. One feels from reading Carr's book that Walker came to vent his energies upon Latin America purely by chance. Had circumstances far beyond his reach in the recesses British-American diplomacy and the offices of Cornelius Vanderbilt and Wall Street not brought Nicaragua to his attention he would have spent his life as energetically, but perhaps more comfortably, crusading for some other cause.

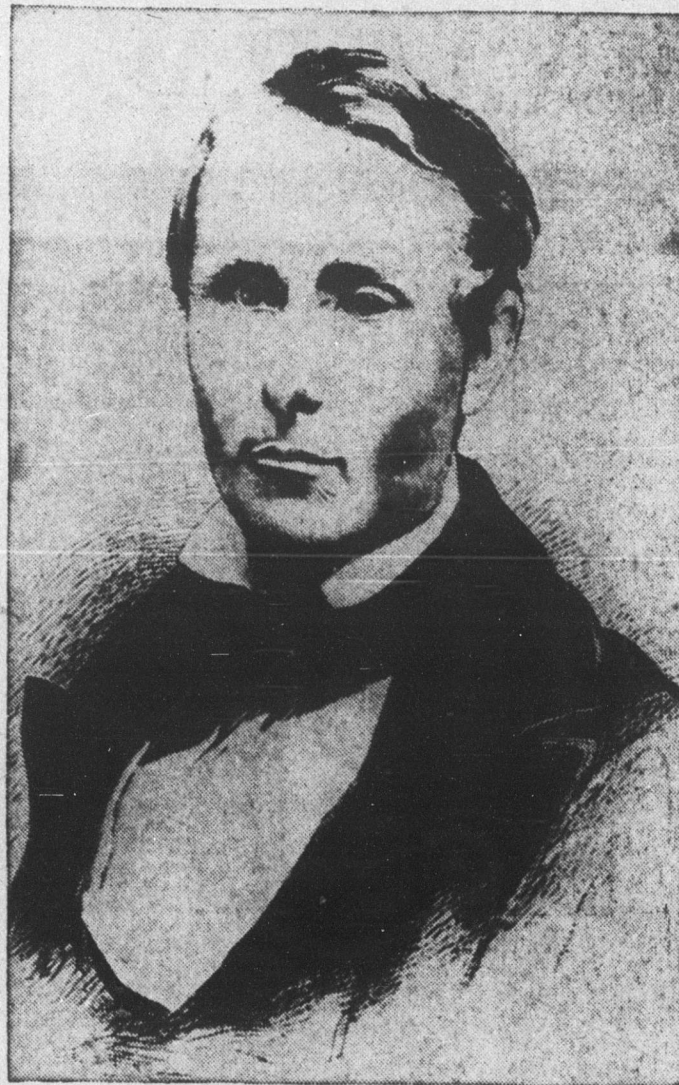
He was born in 1826 in Nashville, Tenn., into a prosperous but rigidly pietistic family. His only escape from the stuffy home life were the tales of chivalry in the romantic literature in which the South then abounded. Carr imputes him with a lifelong "Galahad complex" gained at this time, and Freudianly explains much of his forceful attitude towards life as a result of too much self-imposed sexual abstinence.

A medical degree earned at the age of 19 did not satisfy his desire for romantic purity in a career, and traveling to New Orleans he turned to law and crusading newspaper work. He had the gumption to base a New Orleans daily on a platform of anti-slavery, and, between duels, made a go of it.

The death of a deaf-mute girl he had loved and married in New Orleans drove him on to California in the early 50's. Again he plunged into a journalistic career which climaxed in prison and the successful unseating of the judge who had sent him there.

His "filibustering" career began in 1853 with a disgraceful unsuccessful invasion of Sonora in lower California with the intention of setting up an independent republic. Although Walker's motives were high, behind him were the eager business interests which alternately supported and betrayed him as it suited their purpose until his death.

Failure in Sonora and economic warfare in Vanderbilt enter-



William Walker

prises turned him to Nicaragua, fame, and death. The diplomatic, economic, and personal complexities behind the venture are enough to make the Balkans pale with envy.

Carr presents Walker as a product of his age which teetered on the brink of the Civil War, romantic, impulsive, and impassioned. Opposed to him and his kind were the increasingly powerful money men, cold, calculating, and greedy, who came to dominate the nation after the War. He explains Walker's rapid descent into oblivion after his death as an attempt of the nation off on the money-hungry binge of the 70's, 80's and 90's to forget the romantic self-denying challenge that was Walker.

Carr's biography of Walker is detailed but readable. He seeks to present a picture of a time and a man, but really succeeds only with the latter. This is prob-

At Home With JFK And Books

By EDMUND FULLER. In The Wall Street Journal

It is characteristically American that the selections for the new White House library are in exactly the same category as the furniture (which every dealer in fine bindings knows to be true in many homes). Like much of the furniture, most books for the White House can be acquired only by gift. Whatever the merit of this policy for chairs, beds and tables, there are cultural implications to applying it to books.

Timidity and a lack of vigorous national pride in our working writers, for instance, are reflected in the list's absolute exclusion of living novelists. This would not be likely to happen in any other literate nation. Concretely, this policy means that non-writers such as Richard Nixon and Robert Kennedy are represented while two of our Nobel Prize winners and many Pulitzer Prize ones are not. The selection includes living critics but not living subjects for criticism. A live American novelist may be smuggled into the White House in paperback, or invited to dinner, but mustn't be slipped onto the catalogued shelves.

A conspicuous aspect of the White House library list, too, is its severe overbalance toward scholarly works, many of which are duplicating. Granted that no two individuals or committees would make the same selection on any premise, still the main quarrel is with the premise.

The concept of a "working library" seems unsound beyond standard reference works, encyclopedias, dictionaries. The needs of a President are hard to anticipate, impossible to supply fully and most certainly not confined to works about the U. S. Moreover, research is perform-

ed for him by others. Far too much of the available space is taken up by works which the President or any member of his family or staff could request from the Library of Congress at need. There are acres of books on the present list which no one will read and few will have occasion to use for study or reference. There is much deadly bibliographical and archive stuff. It will keep the White House dust-ers busy.

Surely a richly representative world library of the humanities—fiction, non-fiction, poetry and drama—would grace the executive mansion. A heavy weighting toward American writing would be proper—an exclusive American chauvinism is absurd.

If it is fitting that the Executive mansion of the richest nation and leader of the Free World have a library, then on whatever premise the books are selected, they ought to be bought, not begged. By soliciting books as gifts the Government is directly competing with countless under-financed schools and colleges which need the gift of many of these items far more urgently than does the White House. This writer would feel happier about that trifling expenditure of his tax dollar than about a great many things for which it is spent.

This library list conjures up for us "Imaginary Conversations" in the vein Walter Savage Landor used in the 19th Century. The White House. Evening.

He: If Pablo isn't playing tonight and Marian isn't singing and the reception for King Saud is postponed, what shall we do? She: Let's get something to read from the library.

He: Good. (Scene shifts; the librarian is hovering helpfully.) I feel in the mood for some stories by John Steinbeck.

Librarian: Unfortunately, Mr. President, Mr. Steinbeck is still living.

She: I'm sure if John knew that you wanted . . . He: Have you, no! That would be awful. How about Thurber? Librarian: Well, yes, he's dead—but unhappily hasn't been donated yet.

She: (snooping shelves) "Six Crises," Richard Nixon.

He: No; I was there.

She: (snooping) "How the Other Half Lives," "The Prison Community," "Police Systems in the U. S.," "The Dixie Frontier," "Prejudices—6th Series," "Laughing in the Jungle," "The Americanization of Edward Bok," "The N. Y. Tribune Since the Civil War," "Black Boy." Librarian: If you want fiction, let's see what's here: "Little Women," "Uncle Tom's Cabin," "The Call of the Wild," "Equality," "The Late George Appley."

She: (still snooping) "The Coming of the White Man," Eleanor Roosevelt's story, "Major Campaign Speeches of Adlai Stevenson," "Guide to the Records in the National Archives," "A Report on American University Presses."

Librarian: Here's a new gift: General de Gaulle has contributed "As Others See Us."

A small voice: I want "Peter Rabbit."

Librarian: I'm awfully sorry, but it isn't an American book.

Ferber Found The Magic Was In Living

A KIND OF MAGIC. By Edna Ferber. Doubleday & Co. 335 Pages. \$5.75.

By JOAN BISSELL

"To be alive, to know consciously that you are alive, and to relish that knowledge—this is a kind of magic."

These words open the second volume of Edna Ferber's reminiscences, "A Kind of Magic." Beginning where "A Peculiar Treasure" leaves off, "A Kind of Magic" records Miss Ferber's experiences from 1939 to 1963. These experiences range from building a house in Connecticut to collecting material in Alaska for the novel "Ice Palace"; from touring war-torn Europe in 1945 to motoring across the United States in 1962.

This inventory of her life—as Miss Ferber defines her autobiography—does not neglect to include her "misadventures"; with humor, she describes her almost frantic—and futile—attempts to interest George Kaufman in collaborating on a play about Saratoga Springs; she recalls the Texas wrath that greeted the publication of "Giant"—one man actually threatened to kill her for "defiling" Texas and Texas; she comments on her "fling" in the theater—one week in summer stock during which her performance was described as "adequate."

Recalling her successes, Miss Ferber explains the self-discipline that accompanied the writing of the Pulitzer prize winning novel "So Big," and "Show Boat," "Saratoga Trunk," and "Cimarron." A gregarious person, she forced herself to decline all social invitations and "barricaded" herself in a room without a view. Thus, her only distractions were the characters she created in her novels, characters who sometimes became so strong that they threatened to take the plot into their own hands and run away with it. The solution was to kill off such characters, as she did Luz in "Giant."

Since some of her novels were adapted for motion pictures, she met actors and actresses who appealed to her as individuals. Not as publicized personalities. Working on "Giant," talented young James Dean came to her

attention, and she was disturbed over his dangerous love for speed and sports cars. His death—and the earlier accidental death of her fifteen-year-old cousin, mathematical genius Gunther Hollander—are regarded by Miss Ferber as examples of the destruction of human potential.

Although each chapter of "A Kind of Magic" could be labeled throughout the book is the writer's concern for human beings. This concern was intensely manifested when on a 1945 government tour of air bases in England and Germany, she was present at a briefing session of the Eighth Air Force "boys"—who looked like youths before a raid, and like old men afterward; when she saw Buchenwald concentration camp with its crematorium; when she reached Nordhausen, home of the sinister V-2 bombs which were built by slave laborers working in the interior of a mountain.

Despite these allusions to war and its horror, the tone of this book is one of triumph. To Miss Ferber, our very existence is sound reason for elation: the fact that we are, rather than that we were. Globe-trotting as she did, she met many people; although she has described some of their narrow ways, she always balances their "smallness" and prejudiced acts with accounts of compassion and tolerance.

Purists may object to Miss Ferber's omission of commas in sequences of nouns, verbs, and adjectives. At the most, such an omission requires an occasional re-reading for one to grasp the sense of the sentence. Despite the author's statement that "this book is meant to be as haphazard as the March" day on which this page is being written; rain snow wind clouds; there is chronological unity in her recollections.

With dramatic deftness, she recounts a 24-hour visit with the Franklin Roosevelts in the White House, several days touring New Orleans with Louis Bromfield, and chance meetings with Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne in London, with Paul Gallico in Spain, and with Mike Todd in Paris.

Unlike the "expose" autobiography that presents its writer as frustrated, lonely, staring at the world through red-rimmed eyes and crying "Why was I born?," "A Kind of Magic" presents its writer as one person who is glad to be around: Miss Ferber is frustrated—but only because she won't be there to see the wonderful year 2000. She is a spinster—but not crying in her beer for "the man that got away." She has no grudge against the world—instead, she is still intrigued with the whole business of living.

Dr. Bober took his B.S. at Montana University, his M. S. at Harvard, served in Army Intelligence in Europe during World War I, went back to Harvard and wrote his doctoral thesis on Karl Marx, won Harvard's Wells Prize for 1925-26. He taught at Appleton and other colleges and universities, advised the OUA during World War II, and subsequently wrote another book, entitled "Price and Income Theory."

"Price and Income Theory" is now a standard text. In it, Dr. Bober approaches a difficult question: "In each country, large or small, rich or poor, individuals vary in their capacities, earnings and incomes. Why?" When you think about the question, it becomes more puzzling, less answerable, more elusive. Dr. Bober has spent most of his life tracking it down.

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LAURA MacMILLAN

Portrait Index For Historians

THE NORTH CAROLINA PORTRAIT INDEX. Compiled by Laura MacMillan. University of North Carolina Press. 272 Pages. \$15.00.

Before the advent of the camera man depended on the portrait artist for the posterity of his likeness. And while the camera with its efficiency and speed cut the ranks of portraitists, it has now redressed the damage by making possible the assembly of a North Carolina photograph album for the years 1700-1860.

The Index was assembled in Chapel Hill by Mrs. Laura MacMillan, wife of University Kenan Professor Dougald MacMillan. While it is short on text, her labor still tells a significant story of North Carolina, the men and women who helped build it, those who merely visited or those whose descendants found a home here.

Since most of the portraits are in private hands, many who might have occasion to see them have heretofore not been able to locate them with ease. Mrs. MacMillan has facilitated more than reference with her book; each of the two-hundred odd pictures is accompanied by the name and importance of its subject, the artist who painted it, an approximate date and its present location and owner. It is a book the thoroughgoing historian can ill afford to be without.—WHS.

He Saw The Flaws In Marx

Morton Mandel Bober's book, "Karl Marx's Interpretation of History" is required reading in the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Dr. Bober, for many years a professor of economics at Lawrence College in Appleton, Wisconsin, has retired to Chapel Hill and lives with his wife in Glen Lennox.

"Karl Marx's Interpretation of History" won not only a prize but world-wide renown for its clear statement of Marx's philosophy and its equally clear statement of the flaws in that philosophy. "J. Edgar Hoover says, 'How can Americans fight for their freedom if they don't know what Communism is?'" says Mrs. Bober. "He says M. M.'s book is a must. During the war the FBI used to ask M. M. which of his students he would recommend for the Secret Service."

sat down to talk about wealth. He is very much concerned with wealth because it is one of the key matters in economics. He would prefer to have six months to sit and talk about it, but even so he bears out his former Lawrence colleague's comment on his lucidity.

Oddly enough, and painful though it may seem, in order for a nation to be wealthy it is necessary for some people to have trouble paying their bills. "What is wealth?" said Dr. Bober. "Wealth is not money. The United States had a hundred and eighty million people. India has four hundred million. China has four or five hundred million. But the United States is the wealthiest nation in the world. Why? The answer to this is, because we have more goods and services. We have more tables and chairs and fruits. That is wealth—goods and services. Wealth is not money. In order for a nation to be wealthy, some people must have more money than others. If everybody had a lot of money, then money wouldn't be worth anything. If



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