



# REVIEW OF TEXAS BOOKS



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## \*\*\*\*\* FICTION \*\*\*\*\*

Appelt, Kathi. *ELEPHANTS AFLOAT*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1993. 29p. Illustrations. Hardcover: \$13.95, ISBN 0-15-225384-X. 92-4231. (Juvenile)

After receiving an airmail plea, via bird, to visit Auntie Rawanda, who happens to be an African Elephant, Rama and Raja, who are Asian Elephants, begin a journey which is the plot for this engaging beginning readers' selection. The lonesome niece and nephew pile into a hot air balloon, a most practical conveyance for pachyderms on a pilgrimage. Once airborne they proceed on a prepositional procession through the clouds, across the ocean, and beyond the rainbow, among other places. In fact, the thirteen location words, which provide the bulk of the text, are excellent vocabulary for emergent readers. Each preposition appears in bold, white isolation against a full two--page acrylic illustration by Keith Baker replete with appropriate action and resplendent color. Detailed scenes featuring waterfalls, whales, mountains, and the moon provide plentiful opportunity for discussion. The colorful balloon is packed with paraphernalia which Rama and Raja use to divert themselves during the trip. They arrive safely at their destination accompanied by the loyal messenger bird, and tumble from the basket to rush into Auntie Rawanda's waiting arms. Parents, librarians, and teachers will enjoy sharing this lively, attractive book with children just discovering the joy of reading. College Station resident Kathi Appelt's first book was conceived from a love of elephants inspired by her grandmother's extensive collection of elephant figurines.

Paul W. Miller

Burke, James Lee. *CIMARRON ROSE*. New York: Hyperion, 1997. 288p. Hardcover: \$24.95. ISBN 0-7868-6258-0. 96-30745.

*Cimarron Rose* is the first book in a new series by James Lee Burke, and the setting is in Deaf Smith, Texas. The protagonist is a lawyer who used to be a Texas Ranger and whose family have been Texans for several generations. The plot is very well written and uses descriptions of everyday chores and activities to make the characters multi-dimensional and certainly more likeable. The main character, Billy Bob Holland, is more than another small-town lawyer; he also has friends, neighbors, and a life beyond the practice of law.

Several of the characters show growth and begin to take responsibility for their actions, which is a welcome counter point to the violence and criminal activities taking place. James Lee Burke has introduced and developed characters about whom the reader will want to see what happens in the next volume(s) including Vernon Smothers, the father on record of Billy Bob's illegitimate son Lucas, Temple Carrol, Billy. Bob's reliable investigator, and Marvin Pomroy, the relatively honest prosecutor in a county reputed to have mostly corrupt officials. This book is for mature audiences. Some of the scenes are violent and include drug abuse, physical abuse of prisoners by people in authority, and murder.

*Cimarron Rose*, Burke's fifteenth novel, is definitely worth including in your collectiobook buying public is already making it a best seller.

Dorothy Leising

Cooner, Donna D. *I KNOW AN OLD TEXAN WHO SWALLOWED A FLY*. Dallas: Hendrick-Long Publishing Co., 1996. 31p. Illustrations. Bibliography. Paperback: \$9.95, ISBN 1-885777-14-0. 96-24769. (Juvenile)

Children and adults who have enjoyed the familiar cumulative song and rhyme "I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly" will be amused by the Texas version named *I Know an Old Texan Who Swallowed a Fly* by Donna D. Cooner and illustrated by Ann Hollis Rife. This new version follows the antics of an old Texas cowboy who swallows a fly "... I don't know why he swallowed a fly ..." and various other Texas critters in order to catch the fly. Humorous illustrations depict what happens to the old Texan as he ingests increasingly larger animals including a toad, snake, bird, coon, cat, coyote, cow, and horse. "... Perhaps he'll die." The text and illustrations work hand in hand to reveal the outcome of this Texas cumulative tale.

A glossary is listed in the back of the book to describe the above named critters. In it is important information about how each is tied to its Texas home. Also included is a bibliography of books used to compile the information in the glossary.

Andrea R. Karlin

Goyne, Minetta Altgelt. *TALES FROM THE SUNDAY HOUSE*. Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1997. 144p. Paperback: \$14.95, ISBN 0-87565-173-9. 96-31689.

Tales from the Sunday House is a collection of eleven fictionalized memoirs prepared for Goynes's master's thesis in creative writing at the University of Texas. These are recollections of the everyday lives of Hill Country German Americans from 1921 to 1946, when change kept step with inexorable forces gathering for war and its aftermath. "Through the Old Call," Goynes's title for her thesis, unifies the stories. Goynes believes the cultural changes exacted of these people has been especially intense. In "Twilight" she expresses her thesis emotionally in letters exchanged between two old friends. They lament the loss of German as the first language; they admit mixed feelings about warfare in the homeland; they observe sadly that Americans discard the old for the new; and they recall the cathedral at Köln and springtime walks, old songs, Schiller, Goethe, and traditional foods. The demise of the old men signifies the losses of the old culture, its customs, and its social values that are saved from obliteration only by recording them—as Goynes has done.

The initial sketch is "Kaffeeklatsch," when friends gather for sewing, eating, and enjoying woman talk. There follow tales of the Depression, hardscrabble farmers, tragedy at a stone quarry, a springtime masquerade, confrontation with illness, and young men leaving for war. Supporting the theme of change is the story of Karl Kreutz. He is more than a fully developed character; he is a presence running concurrently with the movement toward adaptation to change. We rejoice with the family at his birth in 1923, commiserate with him when the big boys at school taunt him, and suffer when his father ignominiously removes him from his job as window-washer. We pity him in his loneliness and cheer when he relinquishes his plan to leave the provinciality of his hometown for ports abroad, and with a kind of Joycean epiphany, accepts the family legacies, their land, and their culture.

Goynes's reputation for scholarship and writing are enhanced by this insightful publication. Further, it complements histories of German Americans in Texas and merits a prominent place alongside those histories.

Ernestine Sewell Linck

Jenkins, A.M. BREAKING BOXES. New York: Delacorte Press, 1997. 182p. Paperback: \$14.85, ISBN 0-385-32513-4. 96-53626. (Juvenile)

Winner of the Fourteenth Annual Delacorte Press Prize for a First Young Adult Novel, Breaking Boxes is a skillfully written book geared to readers fourteen and up. It addresses two problems: Charlie Calmont's difficulty expressing his feelings, and the social stigma he experiences because his brother is gay. Both problems put a strain on loner Charlie's new friendship with Brandon, an unlikely pal from the right side of the tracks but the friendship survives in the end. Breaking Boxes is designed to teach understanding, but it is not heavy-handed. The characters are well developed and the protagonist is appealing. The book is told in first person in Charlie's generally credible voice, but it is more introspective than we generally expect a boy's young

adult book to be.

Jo Harper

Landrey, Wanda. LOST IN THE BIG THICKET. Austin: Eakin Press, 1997. 126p. Illustrations. Bibliography. Paperback: \$10.95, ISBN 1-57168-116-7. 96-51663.

In 1913 Luke, age twelve, and his cousin Missy, age ten, are excited to travel without parents to visit their grandparents in Bragg, a settlement forty miles away from Beaumont by train in the Big Thicket. The purpose of the trip is to choose a Christmas tree for the upcoming holidays when they will return to Beaumont with their parents. Their trip is marred by the appearance and strange actions of a shabby old man clutching a box who rides with them on the train. More suspense is created when the man drops a business card, which Missy finds and refuses to return to the gruff man. When the children sight his black gloved hand separated from his arm, they are clearly frightened.

Drawing on her lengthy research of the history and culture of the Big Thicket, author Wanda Landrey brings in a great deal of historical fact about the daily social life in a boarding house, which the grandparents run in this densely wooded biological crossroads. Some of this adds to the realism of the setting, but the quantity of information nearly stalls the plot. Once the plot picks up momentum, the children wander and spend a harrowing night alone in the thicket and suspense is generated. The children are rescued, the mystery is solved, and readers have learned a great deal about life in East Texas in the early part of this century.

Landrey is remembered for Outlaws in the Big Thicket and Boardin' in the Thicket: Reminiscences and Recipes of Early Big Thicket Boarding Houses which received an award from the San Antonio Conservation Society in 1990.

Sally Dooley

Lehrer, Jim. WHITE WIDOW. New York: Random House, 1996. 211p. Hardcover: \$21.00, ISBN 0-679-45236-2. 96-1877.

Apparently those active in the bus transportation business in the 1950s had a lingo all their own. A white widow "meant any mysterious, beautiful, perfect woman passenger who was probably not available. A black widow only better." Thirty-five-year-old Jack T. Oliver loves his job as a driver for the Great Western Trailways covering the Houston to Corpus Christi route. He prides himself on his excellent service, his reputation for being on-time, and his upcoming promotion to Master Operator. He lives quietly and happily, if routinely, with his wife, Loretta, in Corpus. They eat meat loaf every Friday and then make love.

When a white widow steps aboard his bus, everything changes. Although he never learns her name, never touches anything but her elbow in assisting her up the

bus steps, and never has a true conversation with her, his vivid fantasies bring about cataclysmic changes in his life. First, he is a few minutes off schedule, then he withdraws from his wife, who suspects he is having an affair. The reader knows Jack is really losing it when he tampers with the engine so the bus won't start, hoping this will give him an opportunity to talk with the woman about whom he constantly daydreams. Jim Lehrer, noted PBS news anchor and former bus ticket agent in Victoria, carefully develops the personality of Jack and the details of his world so that the events Jack's imagination brings about are plausible and consistent. Since we all fantasize to some degree, readers will be shocked to see where such musings can lead.

Sally Dooley

Priddy, Laurance L. *SON OF DURANGO*. Santa Fe: Sunstone Press, 1996, \$26.95. ISBN 0-86534-242-3. 95-34873.

There are no surprises in *Son of Durango*. A wetback eludes border patrols and police. He reaches Fort Worth. He finds employment. He is exploited and cheated by both Mexicans and Anglos. He likes drinking beer with his buddies, playing pool, and dancing with pretty women. The son of Durango, Jesus, is the hackneyed, stereotyped, despised Mexican. Priddy, however, recreates the stereotype with a difference. He is no observer. Rather, he moves into the mind and heart of Jesus and reports what he finds there in a simple, straight-forward way, without embellishment except when the Virgin de Guadalupe appears. Then realism is supplanted by ethereal beauty.

It is tempting to make a Christ figure of Jesus. Religious symbols and parallels abound. The Virgin is a pervading presence who comes to him in dream-visions, thrusting him forward to his destiny. In one such visit, she appears, tearful, and he sees a black void toward which he moves inexorably. When he is dying, he feels "sad regret for the pain they [his impoverished family, his paralyzed brother, and his pregnant lover] still endure, [his regret] tempered by joy in the knowledge of their ultimate salvation" (176).

To look beyond similarities to Christ leads to an inquiry about Hope-how it deludes and arouses expectations unrealistic and unrealizable. Is this book a travesty on religion? Not to be questioned is its cry to all people. Racial lines, brutally drawn, are reminders of man's inhumanity. Jesus, the victim, is sacrificed on an altar of avarice and hate. In this respect, the story of Jesus is a parable. It is suspenseful, tragic, passionate-and thoughtful. Read it.

Ernestine Sewell Linck

Reynolds, Clay. *PLAYERS*. New York: Carroll & Graf, 1997. 396p. Hardcover: \$24.00, ISBN 0-7867-0407-1. 97-004265.

*Players* proves that Texas novelist Clay Reynolds can switch genre and subject matter with ease and still

stay within the boundaries of the state. After visiting the nineteenth-century west in *Franklin's Crossing*, Reynolds moves forward to twentieth-century Texas with a crime thriller. The result, *Players*, is a genre novel that is far richer in character than most other crime novels and that has a wicked humor accompanying the violence.

Good bad-guy Eddy Lovell has blown his chances at playing professional football, lost a wife and a girlfriend, been set up for one crime, and done time for another one. But, while in prison, Eddie had the good fortune of meeting Moria Mendle, a Dallas underworld boss. Eddie becomes Moria's driver; thus, with Moria's help, Eddie has become a player, a guy in the crime business who knows the score, the right people, and the right act. The novel opens when Moria receives a package with his partner's head inside; so Moria and Eddie drive from Dallas to Houston and search for the partner's murderer in the seamier parts of Houston. Meanwhile, three psychopathic bad guys attempt to kidnap Eddie's daughter, Barbara, from her Los Angeles apartment but instead capture Vicki Sigel, an aging Hollywood starlet. And a third group of bad guys, headed by an incredibly cold-blooded but efficient killer, spies on Eddie and tracks Vickie's kidnappers.

Clay Reynolds does not have a character with redeeming values, morals, or ethics in *Players*. Instead, instinct, memories of past failure, misplaced and uneasy loyalty, fear, and self-preservation govern Reynold's characters. Eddie Lovell is a loser whose saving grace is his bull-headed persistence. Vickie, a marvelous creation, does not reveal herself to be the wrong kidnap victim because of her expectation of headlines. She cannot stop imagining herself in a movie, and in fact, she imagines herself into heroism. Moria's steady insistence of friendship and greed over money makes him a satire of most crime bosses.

Complementing the characters is a plot that at once melds past and present, yet never stalls. We are as interested in the hard-luck experiences of the characters as in their present desperate needs. And while the novel is full of details, the reader should take note of each, for all the small notes and characteristics conspire to twist and push the novel toward its end. And Reynolds has found a perfect setting for his violent, funny, surprise ending: Texas Balmorhea State Park in the off season.

For all the slam-bang action in *Players*, the effect of its violence and mayhem is more like an ice-pick in the brain rather than a shotgun blast to the gut. And as we get to know the hard-luck losers, we see them race toward their inevitably appropriate fates, pushed by their failures, by a nearly Greek sense of cosmic irony, and the sure hand of Clay Reynolds.

Jim Sanderson

Rice, David. *GIVE THE PIG A CHANCE & OTHER STORIES*. Tempe: Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingue, 1996. 179p. Paperback: \$10.00, ISBN 0-927534-54-1.

95-31048.

Fourteen stories are included in this first collection by David Rice. The stories are set in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas and deal with the lives of the Chicano community. Rice presents a fascinating tale in "Tina La Tinaca," in which the all-consuming grief of a woman who loses her child is magnified by the woman's ravenous appetite after the child's death. Her obesity reflects her grief which is so large that when she dies, her body will not fit through the door of her house. In "Empty Corner," Rice shows a twisted version of the love of a father who arranges to have his son beaten up to prove that the boy needs to learn to box.

Other strong stories in the collection are "Give the Pig a Chance" and "She Wants to See the World," the former deals with a young man's need for forgiveness and the latter, with a young woman's first visit to a gay bar. Rice incorporates frogs, pigs, and cows in his stories as well as a spellbinding *curandera* and a housekeeper whose folklore terrifies small boys into obedience. Rice blends Chicano culture with universal themes, resulting in an interesting first collection of stories.

Gayla Chaney

## POETRY

Michener, James A. *A CENTURY OF SONNETS*. Austin: State House Press, 1997. 260p. Hardcover: \$24.95, ISBN 1-880510-50-2; Limited edition, signed: \$200.00, ISBN 1-88051-0. 96-54228.

Any student of Michener's can list the qualities that make him eminent among America's men of letters: he is a wordsmith of the highest order whose keen awareness and extensive knowledge facilitate his masterful use of detail; in his writing, the craning of this detail into the basic elements of character and scene creates an effect of veracity, so that his creations take on an immediacy and reality of their own. Behind each image and situation may be discerned a controlling purpose; a sure hand weaves the many threads into patterns that reflect Michener's *Weltanschauung*, itself a function of his long life of study, work, travel, and human interaction. *A Century of Sonnets* bears these same distinguishing characteristics, with the addition of another, of particular interest to Michener fans and students. In these carefully polished poems the details are memories, the characters and scenes real, the symbols private, and the relationship with his audience more intimate than is possible with modern prose. These poems, written over the course of seventy years, reveal much about Michener's inner life, making him at once greater and less remote. Michener the poet shows himself to us as vulnerable and very human; his poetry draws us into his mind in a way that his memoirs could not. *A Century of Sonnets* was published on February

3, 1997, on the date of Michener's ninetieth birthday, in celebration of his considerable contribution to American literature and culture. Collectors and fans alike will want to make room on their shelves for this well-crafted work.

Andrew B. Preslar

## \*\*\* NONFICTION \*\*\*

### ART

Nodelman, Sheldon. *THE ROTHKO CHAPEL PAINTINGS: ORIGINS, STRUCTURE, MEANING*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997. 359p. Illustrations. Hardcover: \$65.00, ISBN 0-939594-36-6.

Such a complete and scholarly publication on the most famous and important religious work of the twentieth century is long overdue. The chapel is on the campus of Houston's St. Thomas University and was commissioned and financed by John and Dominique de Menil, the city's most famous philanthropists and art collectors. The building, by one of the century's greatest architects, Philip Johnson, and the paintings by one of the greatest artists to come out of the Abstract Expressionist era, Mark Rothko, have been since 1970 attracting visitors from around the world. The author, who teaches art at the University of California in San Diego, tells the entire story of this great work of art, from its conception to the dramatic conflicts between the architect and painter. He explains the content of the paintings and the chapel's significance as one of the rare pieces of modernism that connect art and site.

Lynne Lokensgard

Simmen, Edward. *WITH BOLD STROKES: BOYER GONZALES, 1864-1934*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1997. 112p. Illustrations. Hardcover: \$34.95, ISBN 0-89096-739-3. 94-46066.

Professor Edward Simmen of the Universidad de las Americas-Pueblo, Mexico, has devoted years to the study of Chicano literature as well as the life and art of Texas artist, Boyer Gonzales. A native of Galveston, Gonzales traveled along the southern coast of the United States painting marine scenes in watercolor and oil. His style, illustrated by fifty color plates, bears strong resemblance to the work of the great nineteenth-century landscapist, Winslow Homer, who painted the coasts of New England and Florida. Not only are their styles and techniques similar, but they were friends. Gonzales' relationship with Homer, which is documented by letters from the latter, is central to Simmen's biography. The more prominent artist gave encouragement and advice to his protégé. While Gonzales never achieved the fame of Homer, he was a prominent artist in this country, especially around the turn of the century.

The illustrations show a technical skill that easily rivals that of the more famous artist, and it is of particular interest to see delightful scenes of Southeast Texas depicted in this graceful, fluid style.

Lynne Lokensgard

## BIOGRAPHY

Cole, Thomas R. *NO COLOR IS MY KIND: THE LIFE OF ELREWY STEARNS AND THE INTEGRATION OF HOUSTON*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997. 239p. Illustrations. Index. Hardcover: \$40.00, ISBN 0-292-71197-2. Paperback: \$17.95, ISBN 0-292-71198-0. 96-44105.

This is a most unusual book. Three quarters of the book details the previously unreported integration of Houston during the early 1960s, while the remaining quarter is devoted to an account of Eldrewy Stearns' remarkable yet disastrous life. In 1961 Stearns, a twenty-nine-year-old law student at Texas Southern University in Houston, led young black students ten years his junior to stage the first sit-in at a Weingarten's grocery store lunch counter, the first sit-in west of the Mississippi. Although there were tense moments during the next two years, integration of public accommodations was quietly accomplished without the violence that had occurred in other Southern cities. Movement leaders such as Stearns worked with civic and business leaders to desegregate with the agreement that there be no media publicity. The picketers were often jailed and were short of cash for bail, but change was negotiated and achieved. To piece together the history, Cole interviewed over sixty participants in the events to flesh out Stearns' often rambling accounts. Although there are no footnotes, Cole provides notes in the back with the source of the information.

Throughout the first history part, Cole mentions Stearns' slow descent into madness as he became "unable to perceive any boundaries between himself and the movement." He drifted in and out of law school and jobs, wrote hot checks, and embezzled from the movement for which he risked his life. Following the rejection of his fiancée, he reeled into a "mad and solitary odyssey" of women, alcohol, unemployment, and homelessness. In and out of state hospitals and on and off prescription drugs, he ended up in a Galveston psychiatric hospital where Cole, Professor at the Institute for the Medical Humanities at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, first met him in 1984. In hopes of healing Stearns through the telling of his story, Cole began a painful collaborative effort with the ill man. Cole describes Stearns' manic depression and how its symptoms not only enabled Stearns to lead the integration of Houston but also make probable his own personal disintegration. Racism and disease greatly influenced Stearns' behavior, but Cole realized finally that Stearns was a morally ambiguous person who was somewhat responsible for his own failures.

Readers will gain insight into history, sociology, and psychology in this sensitive and original study of an ul-

timately tragic life.

Sally Dooley

Pickle, Jake and Peggy Pickle. *JAKE*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997. 272p. Illustrations. Index. Hardcover: \$22.95, ISBN 0-292-76572-X. 96-10090.

In the summer of 1995, Peggy Pickle convinced her father, ex-Congressman J.J. "Jake" Pickle, to sit still long enough to put together a collection of stories about his life in politics. He had always said that he did not intend to write a book, but this "collection" is described by Jack Valenti as one of the best books on the life of a congressman that he has read, and I agree. From his West Texas roots, the political game he entered at UT was a man's game through most of his life, and at every stage the reader encounters the individuals who were big players. The central figure in Jake Pickle's political career was Lyndon Johnson, whose vitality, shrewdness, intelligence, crudeness, domineering manner, sentimentality, and intensity constantly enter the story.

After a career in the Navy in World War II and a stint as the part owner of KVET radio in Austin, Pickle entered politics through a public relations firm, as a state employee. When he talks about the 1950s of the Communist scare, the Korean War, and the liberal-conservative split in the Democratic Party, he speaks only generally about these issues. He had been on the conservative side, and his public relations firm had filmed "The Port Arthur Story" to support Allan Shivers and undermine the candidacy of Ralph Yarborough. It was negative campaigning on a major scale, and he said that he notes that it was not his finest hour. The reader will certainly need more than the pages of this book to understand those years in Texas politics.

Once Pickle enters his congressional years, the delightful anecdotes continue, but he also chronicles his concern for three major issues. He was one of a handful of southern congressmen who voted for the 1964 Civil Rights Bill. He was and is very concerned about abuses of tax exemptions for charities and about how big business threatens our nation's pension funds. Pickle seems to have genuinely enjoyed his life in politics, and I leave you with "The Rules," Jake Pickle's guide to success in politics. They start with: "In a parade, don't get behind the horses . . . but do ride in a convertible with your name on the side." The last one is: "Never take it all for granted." Jake Pickle followed that rule.

JoAnn Stiles

Porterfield, Nolan. *LAST CAVALIER: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOHN A. LOMAX, 1867-1948*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1996. 580p. Illustrations. Bibliography. Hardcover: \$34.95, ISBN 0-252-02216-5. 95-50212.

John Lomax was a Texas Huck Finn on his family farm southwest of Fort Worth. He was a rural school

teacher, bond salesman, storyteller, and lecturer. His university associations included: editor and frequent contributor to publications at the University of Texas, Registrar at U.T., English professor at Texas A&M University, Secretary of Texas Exes, Secretary of Faculties, and Assistant Director of the Department of Extension, U.T. On the national level, he was Honorary Curator of American Folk Songs, Library of Congress and National Advisor of Folklore and Folkways, Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration. He collected ballads, popularized Southwest balladry, and was a foremost preserver of the roots of Texas culture. He was a complex man who has become a Texas institution.

Lomax's ambition was to be a professor at U.T, but he was thwarted despite his network of "good old boys." While at Harvard and with the encouragement of George Lyman Kittredge, Lomax turned to ballad collecting. He had an uncanny sense for ferreting out singers, and, in the end, he published American Ballads and Folk Songs, Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads, Our Singing Country (with son Alan), Negro Songs as Sung by Leadbelly (the Lomax-Leadbelly lore is a story in itself), and, among others, his autobiography, Adventures of a Ballad Hunter.

He was "a rare combination of Northern force and Southern fire-the Puritan and Cavalier" (42). He had two bases of operation: the East (Harvard, that is) to which he looked for approval, respect, and power, and Texas (Austin, that is) to which he was drawn, heart and soul, though his way was strewn with tribulation. In thirty years he was fired or forced to leave U.T. three times. His administrative posts drew him into politics, and he had no tact.

Porterfield's remarkably researched biography is a long-awaited tribute to a man whose labors enriched America's culture and left a heritage still influencing American song. The Texas Institute of Letters recognized the book as the best work of nonfiction by selecting it as the winner of the Carr P. Collins Award.

Ernestine Sewell Linck

Young, Nancy Beck and Lewis L. Gould. TEXAS, HER TEXAS: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF FRANCES GOFF. Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1997. 224p. Illustrations. Index. Hardcover: \$29.95, ISBN 0-87611-159-2. 96-52778.

Frances Goff (1916-1994) contributed to the development of Texas in three very direct ways. In her early twenties, this small-town girl became an "Austin insider" because of her personality, organizational skills, and contacts. Beginning as a secretary to a legislator, she soon had well paying jobs with state commissions and rose to be State Budget Director. In 1951 she shifted careers, moved to Houston, and became Assistant to the Director/ President, Dr. R. Lee Clark, where she was instrumental in securing funds from the legislature for the growth of M.D. Anderson Cancer Hospital into the world-class research and treatment center

that it is today. As always her winning ways with people, attention to detail, and desire for excellence determined that she oversaw building and furnishing projects with the same amount of concentration that she devoted to organizing seminars, or developing memorialization programs to raise money. Bluebonnet Girls State, the Texas chapter of a national group founded by the American Legion Auxillary in 1941 to educate girls in democracy, became Goff's third driving interest in life. She visualized it as a means to demonstrate the political process to seventeen-year-old women and to encourage their participation. For four decades she guided and led this organization through integration, the women's movement, and financial problems. Many young women, including Governor Ann Richards, attribute their success to Goff's influence in Girls State. Over 21,000 women attended during her years at the helm.

Although Goff is an impressive individual, this book will likely be most meaningful to her associates at M.D. Anderson and Girls State. Young and Gould are careful researchers but the narrative lacks vitality.

Sally Dooley

Freiberg, Kevin and Jackie Freiberg. NUTS! SOUTHWEST AIRLINES' CRAZY RECIPE FOR BUSINESS AND PERSONAL SUCCESS. Austin: Bard Press, 1996. 363p. Illustrations. Bibliography. Index. Hardcover: \$24.95, ISBN 1-885167-18-0. 96-9718.

Southwest Airlines is considered to be a very colorful and free-spirited maverick among its peers in commercial aviation. It should then follow that only a very colorful and free-spirited book could be written to adequately tell the amazing story about Southwest and its equally colorful chief executive officer Herb Kelleher. Written by Kevin and Jackie Freiberg of San Diego Consulting Group, Inc., Nuts! not only looks at the company history, but also, more importantly, shows how a business can still prosper by not conforming to the traditional ideas of management and marketing.

On the business side, Southwest Airlines stays focused on its niche of short trips and does not seek to be as big as its brethren. Everything is kept simple and streamlined: no first-class or reserved seats, no meals on board. Focus is on profitability in a niche rather than worry about market share. It is the human side that really tells the story of Southwest Airlines' success. People are hired for spirit and enthusiasm and not necessarily for their skills. Bureaucracies and committees are minimized with the focus on individuals. Creativity and individuality among employees are encouraged. Perhaps the most unconventional business twist is that employees come first and customers second. Employees are not "second-guessed" or reprimanded for making appropriate, unilateral decisions in situations that come up in their normal duties. Employees are part of the Southwest community family and are treated with respect and supported by the company.

The book is illustrated with numerous color pictures



and illustrations. Many testimonials and quotations are given throughout. In addition to the usual print sources in the bibliography, the authors interviewed about 100 employees, business partners and other individuals in compiling this book. The only minor downside to the book may be the "cheerleading" style of the authors, whose consulting group has worked with Southwest Airlines for over ten years. On the other hand, it seems quite appropriate that this style of narration be used to tell the Southwest story.

This book gets a strong recommendation for business collections in academic and public libraries. Students in management, marketing and human relations would certainly benefit from Nuts!

Jon P. Tritsch

## EDUCATION

Clegg, Luther Bryan, ed. THE EMPTY SCHOOLHOUSE: MEMORIES OF ONE-ROOM TEXAS SCHOOLS. Bryan: Texas A&M University Press, 1997. 225p. Illustrations. Index. Hardcover: \$24.95, ISBN 0-89096-749-0. 96-52977.

Gone but not forgotten and thanks to this oral-history-based memoir never to be forgotten are the one-room rural schoolhouses of West Texas. Editor Luther Bryan Clegg, a TCU education professor, interviewed some seventy-seven students and teachers for this nostalgic potpourri of memories. Ranging from throwing paper wads to teaching reading by the "word picture" method, they present a vivid picture of what it was like to attend school "back then." Divided into two sections, one for students and another for teachers, recollections cover school buildings and organization, transportation, teaching and instruction, discipline and punishment, recess and recreation, teacher training and employment, and community life. Enhancing interest in the first-person accounts are Clegg's observations. One learns, for example, that discipline was the primary concern of school trustees in hiring teachers and that some schools were dragged on wooden skids from place to place according to need. The coming of automobiles and societal changes spelled the end of these small schools, which were consolidated into larger districts. But these tales of playing mumblety-peg, bringing biscuit and bacon sandwiches to school in syrup cans, reciting lessons, whipping or getting whipped, and of course, walking several miles to school will enchant folks for generations to come.

Mary M. Fisher

Sperry, Neil. 1001 MOST ASKED TEXAS GARDENING QUESTIONS. Arlington: Summit Publishing Group, 1997. 406p. Hardcover: \$19.95, ISBN 1-56530-229-X. 96-051263.

Texas gardening legend Neil Sperry has collected the 1001 gardening questions he has been asked most frequently over the last twenty-five years. They are ar-

anged logically in thirteen chapters with headings like "Fundamentals of Texas Gardening," "Planning the Landscape," "Vines," "Annuals," and "Houseplants, Greenhouses and Plant Propagation."

Examples of questions included are: When do I prune my various plants? What is a good fast-growing shade tree? What is killing my redbud photinia? Their leaves have purple spots all over them. What vines are best against the walls of my house? What type of fertilizer is best for my lawn? Why don't my tomatoes set fruit? The top one hundred and one questions are highlighted.

Sperry's answers are pithy, practical, and friendly. He never overwhelms with too much information. Reading his book is like listening to advice from a knowledgeable and kindly neighbor. The chapters, headings, and subheadings encourage browsing, but readers should not ignore the index. The information you seek may be found in several answers in different chapters. Illustrations, unfortunately, are absent from this collection. But that's always a tradeoff: without visuals, there's more text. If you enjoy thumbing through pictures, go elsewhere. But if you're looking for detailed answers to specific questions, you've come to the right place. Recommended for beginning through intermediate Texas gardeners and transplanted gardeners new to the Texas climate.

Stephen Curley

Wasowski, Sally and Andy Wasowski. NATIVE TEXAS GARDENS. Houston: Gulf Publishing Company, 1997. 185p. Illustrations. Bibliography. Index. Hardcover: \$39.95, ISBN 0-88415-513-7. 53-995.

In 1988 the Wasowskis published Landscaping with Native Texas Plants, which gave useful information about the plants themselves and how to grow them, but left it to the reader's imagination how they would look in the landscape. This new book, Native Texas Gardens, fills that void. Two hundred color plates illustrate numerous examples of residential, commercial, and public landscaping using native plants. The gardens come in many styles, from the natural-looking backyard wildlife habitat to the more formal residential front yard. The examples, selected from all parts of the state demonstrate that it is possible to enjoy minimal maintenance, minimal use of chemicals and pesticides, and low water consumption while still having an attractive landscape wherever one lives in Texas.

In addition to helpful landscaping advice, the authors provide us with a list of landscape architects, designers, and plant nurseries that specialize in native Texas plants. The book also includes a list of other helpful books, plus a catalog of common and botanical names of both native and nonnative plants that are mentioned in the book. With the burgeoning interest in native plant gardening throughout the state, this book should be in all Texas town libraries.

Betty Jean (B.J.) Cale

## HISTORY

Baker, T. Lindsay. *THE FIRST POLISH AMERICANS: SILESIAN SETTLEMENTS IN TEXAS*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1996. Reprint. 268p. Illustrations. Bibliography. Index. Paperback: \$16.95, ISBN 0-89096-725-3. 78-6373.

Texas A&M University Press in reprinting T. Lindsay Baker's *The First Polish Americans* has done a favor for both students of Polish American history and anyone interested in how ethno-historical research should be conducted. This award-winning history of the first Polish American settlements in America is meticulously researched and documented. The scope of the author's research is remarkable, as he has worked with original archives in Poland, Germany and Texas. Most importantly, Baker managed in interviews with the descendants of the early settlers to gain access to their precious letters, telling both their expectations and the realities of life in the new land of Texas.

The book begins with an analysis of the conditions in the Silesian towns that brought the Polish population then under Prussian rule (today part of Poland) to seek a better life in America. Working mostly with primary sources, the author takes up the story of Father Leopold Moczygemba, whose letters home, starting with his family and friends, began the Polish emigration to Texas. With the settling of Panna Maria, Texas, came three important firsts in Polish American history: the first settlement, the first church and the first school. More settlers and settlements followed. In vivid detail Baker examines the impacts of the hardships, Indians, the Civil War, Reconstruction and the isolation on the immigrants, who in spite of it all, retain their Polish heritage into the twentieth century.

Richard J. Lysiak, Jr.

Grant, Joseph M. *THE GREAT TEXAS BANKING CRASH: AN INSIDER'S ACCOUNT*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996. 316p. Illustrations. Bibliography. Index. Hardcover: \$29.95, ISBN 0-292-72791-7. 96-10331.

Anyone who has lived in the Lone Star state since the early 1970s can remember the tremendous economic boom Texas enjoyed in those years only to be followed by the terrific bust in the following decade. In this book, Joseph M. "Jody" Grant, former chairman and chief executive officer of Texas American Bancshares (TAB) of Fort Worth, recalls his bank holding company's struggles with the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) to stay afloat. Grant neatly describes the two main factors which led to the state's hard times: the sharp downturn of oil prices in 1986 (from \$30 to under \$10 a barrel in a roughly ninety-day period), and the resulting collapse of an overbuilt and drastically devalued commercial real estate market. In the wake of the rubble, a devastating 506 Texas banks failed during the period of 1983-1992, and the FDIC bailed out nine of the ten largest banks in the state, representing some of the nation's largest bank holding

companies. The book is an eye-opener when one realizes that as a result, no Texas banks rank among the top 100 anymore and that the state's major banking resources are now in the hands of out-of-state interests.

The author relates his valiant battle with the FDIC to initially affect an open bank merger with National Bancshares of Texas (NBC) of San Antonio that would not only protect the interests of both the shareholders and the creditors, but also would have insured that the banking interests would have remained within the state rather than bringing in out-of-state ownership. The author paints an unflattering picture of an indecisive FDIC that allowed the bank holding companies to continue hemorrhaging in red ink for seventeen months, and that continually went back on their words of assurances of an open bank solution, even up to the closing day of July 20, 1989. After stating in a memorandum that TAB's failure was beyond the control of the officers and the board members and that they would not be held personally liable, the FDIC again went back on their assurances and attempted a lawsuit against them three years later, even going as far as to maintain that the agency's memorandum was a forgery. One can appreciate the enormous task the FDIC had in dealing with the banking problems nationwide, but the agency's indecisiveness and heavy-handedness toward the Texas banks does make one pause in bewilderment.

Grant's writing style is not too technical, which makes this book easy for the non-banker to read and understand. Academic libraries will want to add this title to their business collections. Business students wanting to go into banking will want to include this book on their reading lists. It would not be surprising if individuals involved with the state's financial institutions will be reading this work as well.

Jon P. Tritsch

Jones, Charla. *THE CRADLE OF TEXAS: A PICTORIAL HISTORY OF SAN AUGUSTINE COUNTY*. Austin: Eakin Press, 1997. 112p. Illustrations. Bibliography. Index. Hardcover: \$31.95, ISBN 1-57168-128-0. 97-163123.

Of interest to residents and students of San Augustine and East Texas, this collection of approximately 300 photographs illustrates the history from the days before the Republic to the present. In the early days of Texas, San Augustine and many of its inhabitants played pivotal roles in the story of Texas. Charla Jones, author and San Augustine resident, divides this history into five sections, each with a brief history. The book opens with "Pioneers and the Republic," and continues with "Statehood: A New Beginning for Texas" and "Turn of the Century in East Texas." She concludes with "Patriotism Challenged" about the world wars and "San Augustine Restored," which pictures historical restorations and plans for reconstruction of the Spanish Mission Nuestra Senora de los Dolores de los Ais and a visitor and interpretive center. All photo-



graphs are captioned, and people are identified so that the reader sees the homes, churches, schools and the families who built the city and were active participants in Texas' past. This book would be useful as a companion to better histories of the place and period, but Jones is to be commended for the number and variety of photos she has collected and identified.

Sally Dooley

Jennings, N. A. *A TEXAS RANGER*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997. Reprint. 158p. Paperback: \$9.95, ISBN 0-8061-2903-4. 96-44442

*A Texas Ranger* will have great appeal to both serious historians and casual readers of Texana. Serious historians will have opportunity to add to their collection of stories of the Rangers during the late 1870s when the Rio Grande area was inundated with cattle rustlers on both sides of the river. Jennings first person account includes short chapters on McNelly's Rangers as they pursued John Wesley Hardin, King Fisher's outlaw group, and the feuding families of Taylor-Sutton, as well as the more developed chapters on the Mexican guerrillas. These stories are purported to be true by Jennings, an eighteen-year-old at the time he joined the Texas Rangers. The book's forward was written by the legendary storyteller J. Frank Dobie in 1930. Because of Dobie's endorsement of the book, the serious historian will find an added attraction, as it caused the rift in friendship between Dobie and Walter Prescott Webb. But the casual reader will also find this reprint fascinating. The short chapters make it easy to pick up on a moment's notice and enjoy one more escapade of the Texas Rangers where the accomplishments of the Rangers truly were of Texas proportion. This book is a must in every library both for research and recreational reading. It would be especially powerful if read aloud to students and discussed in terms of the effect history has on the present.

Nita Rowe

La Fontaine, Ray and Mary La Fontaine. *OSWALD TALKED: THE NEW EVIDENCE IN THE JFK ASSASSINATION*. Gretna: Pelican Publishing Co., 1996. 454p. Illustrations. Bibliography. Index. Hardcover: \$27.00, ISBN 1-56554-029-8. 94-45945.

This is a ponderous tome by any standards. Most such meticulously researched and documented pieces are dry, the notes and asides invasive, and the style bland if not unsavory. *Oswald Talked*, however, is surprisingly readable, even enjoyable. The La Fontaines, award-winning Dallas journalists, have managed to avoid the two worst extremes of such writing: blatant bias and overemphasis of objective detail. Instead they have produced a thoroughly annotated critical review of the prevalent extant theories and views on this controversial topic, showing how newly unearthed, long-ignored or suppressed factual evidence directly contradicts the pet theories that have prevailed to this point and leading the reader to conclude that domestic terrorism is not a recent phenomenon.

The accumulation of detail creates effects on the mind both illuminating and disturbing; without doubt these are the two effects the La Fontaines have sought to achieve. The evidence they have uncovered may be interpreted as suggesting links between the FBI, high-ranking members of the US military, and a well-funded, highly organized group of anti-Castro/anti-Kennedy Cubans; if not for the notes and references to indisputable documented historical fact, *Oswald Talked* might be mistaken for a novel or screenplay.

In addition to the extensive notes documenting the sources referenced in the text, this attractive and carefully edited book has a bibliography, an index, appendices, photographs, and reproductions of a number of documents. The chapter titles are more clever than illustrative, but one must allow the authors some license in trying to bring humor and fresh perspective to a mystery that continues to defy solution.

Andrew B. Preslar

Marvin, Isabel R. *ONE OF FANNIN'S MEN*. Dallas: Hendrick-Long Publishing Company, 1997. 104 p. Illustrations. Paperback: \$8.95, ISBN 1-885777-19-1. 97-11719.

*One of Fannin's Men* is a good example of how primary source material can be used to recreate history. The author describes in an easy to understand style the aid Mexicans gave the Texans who were able to survive the original slaughter of Goliad. This book will surely help in promoting the contributions and risks the Mexicans took in Texas' quest for freedom. The story is based on genealogical records of the life of Edward Wingate as well as newspaper articles, family Bibles, personal records and census reports that have documented the life of this Goliad survivor. Not only is the book accurate historically to the events following the massacre at Goliad, but the author does a magnificent job of intertwining the lifestyle of a Mexican family in 1836 Texas. One such example is how Isabel Marvin uses her research of herbal medicine in the early days of Texas in her story. There is no doubt this will interest the teenagers to whom the book is directed, as well as the story of survival after the Goliad massacre itself. An added bonus is the last chapter in the book, which gives not only the historical account of Goliad, but is interpretive of Fannin as well. Middle school classroom teachers would find this book useful for class discussions. It is easy to read, accurate to history, to the point, and after the first chapter, fast moving.

Nita Rowe

Torres, Luis. *VOICES FROM THE SAN ANTONIO MISSIONS*. Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 1997. 301p. Illustrations. Index. Hardcover: \$24.95, ISBN 0-89672-278x. 97-000709.

Since the evacuation of Pompeii in the eighteenth century, surviving villages on vanished or near-vanished historic sites have been cleared away for the supposed greater good of scholarship and the re-creation of a

more glorious past. In this work we learn that communities of descendants of Indian inhabitants of San Antonio's Spanish missions remained on or near the ruined sites until quite recently, when they were moved -and lives disrupted-to create San Antonio Missions National Historic Park.

This case is effectively made by this collection of oral histories of eighteen individuals associated in some way with the missions: from long-time area resident Claude Guerrero to historian Henry Guerra to the Catholic Church's mission guardian, Monsignor Balthasar Janacek. Oral histories, however, carry the burden of remembered "facts" that may be not quite accurate, as the author and chief interviewer acknowledges. He adds that to verify each fact would have been impossible. Consequently, readers are left to guess which of the differing statements of the same facts are accurate and which are not. Also, considerable space is devoted to details of subjects' lives, which may make them more real as people, but which have no bearing on life around the missions. General readers will be entertained by the conversations. Social historians and students will find much raw material to be processed and distilled for a concise and reliable account of the kaleidoscope of the human history of San Antonio's Spanish missions.

Mary M. Fisher

Weniger, Del. *THE EXPLORERS' TEXAS, Vol. 2: THE ANIMALS THEY SAW*. Austin: Eakin Press, 1997. 200p. Illustrations. Bibliography. Index. Hardcover: \$27.95, ISBN 1-57168-100-0. 96-2845.

Del Weniger is Professor Emeritus of Biology at Our Lady of the Lake University, San Antonio. He has been researching Texas wildlife for almost fifty years, and in this second volume of his *Explorers' Texas* series, he examines explorers' and pioneers' written records of the animals they found before 1860. By revealing what animals were in Texas then, he shows what changes have resulted from man's activities and gives some understanding of an unmodified natural community. Chapters are devoted to buffalo, deer, antelopes, elk, bighorn mountain sheep, bears, wolves, cats, foxes, hogs, other "critters," rodents, and rabbits and hares. In spite of the confusion of differing common names and quotes from many sources, the author has succeeded in providing an interesting panorama of the abundance of wild life in Texas before the disruptions by human encroachment. The text is augmented with location maps and black and white illustrations from the eighteenth century. Endpapers have a Texas map of counties and rivers. The book includes extensive notes on sources cited, a bibliography, and index. Anyone interested in the history of Texas and the plains states will enjoy this picture of previous centuries. The book is also useful as a source of information about specific animals and the inter-relatedness of all creatures. Other volumes in the projected series will cover the land and waters, birds and birders, and the trees.

Frances M. Ramsey

Williams, David A. *BRICKS WITHOUT STRAW: A COMPREHENSIVE HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICANS IN TEXAS*. Austin: Eakin Press, 1997. 457p. Illustrations. Bibliography. Index. Hardcover: \$29.95, ISBN 1-57168-041-1. 95-46442.

In a curious amalgamation of articles, histories, and numerous brief biographies, David A. Williams has made a contribution to the popular history of African Americans in Texas. Although his book is wide ranging, it is not comprehensive, but it will provide a reference for general readers and Texas history students. The sections containing the inspiring biographies of numerous well known and obscure black Texans will be especially useful to teachers and junior and senior high students, who can readily access the information. About one half of the thirteen chapters are written by Williams, Director of the Texas African American Heritage Organization, Inc. and visiting professor of history at Howard Payne University and Huston-Tillotson College; the remainder are written by eight qualified and varied authors and academics. While the book is useful as a general history, the collection will not be satisfying for academics because of the lack of documentation. For Williams' introductory four chapters, spanning the years 1528-1995, there is a three-and-a-half page bibliography for only the first two chapters. Since there are no footnotes, it would be time consuming for a student to go to the original sources. Bibliographies are provided for chapters 6 and 9, but they are without footnotes. Chapter 9 appears to be a collection of editorials from Texas newspapers, but how can one tell? Only Chapter 8, "Freedmantown: The Origins of a Black Neighborhood in Houston," by Louise Passey Maxwell follows conventional endnoting. (The endnotes are incorrectly entitled "Chapter 4" in the back of the book.)

Several other topics covered are "The Seminole-Negro Indian Scouts in Texas," "They Danced Until Dawn and other Untold Texas Legends," "The Civil Rights March on Austin, Texas, 1963," and "A History of Higher Education for African American Texans, 1872-1977" which makes one question why the book does not have articles that bring readers through to the 1990s. These articles, which Williams edited, were perhaps first published elsewhere, but who knows?

Williams has rounded up a lot of material for this book, and it will be a helpful resource for school, university, and public libraries. Still it will be frustrating for those who want to pursue the sources of his and the other authors' information.

Sally Dooley

## TRIVIA

Cannon, Bill. *A TREASURY OF TEXAS TRIVIA*. Plano: Republic of Texas Press, 1997. 192p. Illustrations. Index. Paperback: \$12.95, ISBN 1-55622-526-1. 96-40199.

The mere juxtaposition of the words "Texas" and

"Trivia" in the same sentence can be offensive to some people. They would argue with conviction that absolutely nothing about Texas and Texans is trivial! Fortunately, Mr. Cannon, the native Texas author, holds no such pretensions. He would one assumes, allow that there is plenty about the state that can be categorized as trivial. Further, he might argue that it is precisely through the accumulation of trivia that the true grandeur and scale of Texas is revealed. The various nuggets of miscellany contained in the book run the gamut from amusing (Bowie County's Bobby Don Blocker, a.k.a. Dan Blocker of "Bonanza" fame, was fourteen pounds at birth) to disconcerting (Alamo hero Jim Bowie was actually a Mexican citizen). The work is sparingly illustrated with photographs and drawings that truly complement the content. The index is reasonably good, although it is incomplete in spots. For example, the index listing for Dale Evans takes the reader only to Miss Evans' Dallas radio days entry and not to the entry that lists her true name (Francis "with an 'i'" Octavia Smith). The index proves to be fairly important since the book is broken down into a rather odd progression of sections: "Truth Is Stranger Than Fiction," "Lost in the Footnotes of Texas History," "People," "Firsts," "Geography" and "Local Trivia." Recommended for Texana collections and for those patiently awaiting the Lone Star edition of the Trivial Pursuit board game.

David Carroll

## Contributors

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