



THE KEY REPORTER

Adventures in Wonderland

A Scholar in Washington

By Diane Ravitch

I GUESS I WAS READY when the call came from Lamar Alexander, former governor of Tennessee and recently appointed by President Bush to be secretary of education. He invited me to come to Washington and tell him what I thought he should do. To those of us who spend our hours hoping to speak truth to power, never quite sure whether anyone is listening, the invitation was irresistible.

At lunch a week later, Alexander and his deputy, David Kearns, former chairman of Xerox, listened to me intently on the subject of education (later they told me they couldn't get a word in edgewise). A few days later, Alexander asked me to join his team. We would start a crusade to improve education, he said, and my assignment would be to put the topic of standards high on the nation's agenda.

There is one sure way to achieve eternal life: Become a federal program.

I truly didn't want to do it; I liked working at home in jeans and didn't want to feel compelled to go to an office every day. As a writer and academic, I had never had to mouth anyone else's opinions or defer to any party line; besides, I was a lifelong Democrat. But as Alexander described the opportunity, I heard the music begin to swell in the background, and my brain seemed flooded with clichés about seizing the day, daring greatly, entering the arena, and all that. I believed it.

In July 1991, I was sworn into office as assistant secretary in the U.S.



Diane Ravitch

Department of Education, in charge of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), and counselor to the secretary. Eighteen months later, on January 21, 1993, I was the last person left at the Education Department, the official who turned over the metaphorical keys to the incoming Clinton administration.

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Jane Alexander to Speak at Associates' Fall Meeting

Jane Alexander, head of the National Endowment for the Arts, will be the speaker at the annual banquet of the Phi Beta Kappa Associates in New York City. The banquet will take place at the American Museum of Natural History on October 26. For information about the ΦBK Associates, contact the Society's headquarters at 1811 Q Street NW, Washington, DC 20009.

ΦBK Members Invited to Symposium on the Society's Identity, Future

A symposium to discuss issues related to what Phi Beta Kappa is and what it should be will be held on Saturday, October 26, from 9 A.M. to 12 noon at Hunter College in New York City. All members of Phi Beta Kappa are invited to attend.

ΦBK President Charles Blitzer, ΦBK Secretary Douglas Foard, and ΦBK Senators Joan Ferrante, Donald Lamm, and David Levering Lewis are among those who are expected to make presentations. The symposium is sponsored by the Middle Atlantic District, the ΦBK chapter at Hunter College, the New York ΦBK association, and the Phi Beta Kappa Associates.

To register to attend and to receive more information about the symposium, write to Dr. C. Howard Krukofsky, Hunter College, Box 404, 695 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10021.

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Since I left government, I have often thought about what I learned while I was there. The lessons can be distilled into eight basic and interrelated axioms:

1. The United States has two dream factories—Hollywood and Washington, D.C. Both feed the fantasies of the American public by encouraging people to believe that intractable, deep-rooted problems (and even their psychological needs) will be solved by a magic feather or a new program.

2. The federal government is run by Congress, especially by the House of Representatives, which controls the budget and decides how much money will be spent, who will receive it, and what they may or may not spend it on.

3. Those who work inside the Beltway in Washington, D.C., believe that they are smarter than everyone outside the Beltway because they have the power to write the laws and regulations that everyone else in the country has to obey.

4. There is one sure way to achieve eternal life: Become a federal program. Many programs administered by the Department of Education long ago outlived their usefulness, but they continue to receive appropriations year after year, protected by friends in Congress.

5. All federal education programs are designed by lobbyists employed by education interest groups. Congressional staff members rely on them because they are presumed to know much more about the issues and problems than anyone else, and they know exactly who should get the federal dollars (their clients).

6. Euphemisms disguise purposes. A tax was called a “revenue enhancement”; a bill meant to funnel hundreds of millions of dollars to state education departments was titled “the neighborhood schools improvement act.”

7. Anything worth funding is worth funding in several different federal agencies at the same time. In one area alone—mathematics and

science education—there are programs in 17 different federal agencies, expending more than \$2 billion annually.

8. The federal government will never be the leading edge of educational reform because political considerations make it impossible either to reject bad programs or to recognize good programs. Federal programs work best when distributing money based on need, because it is easy to measure whether everyone got what they were entitled to (regardless of the quality of education they support). Federal programs work worst when any judgment about their quality or effectiveness is required, because politics gets in the way of making such judgments.

The federal government will never be the leading edge of educational reform because political considerations make it impossible either to reject bad programs or to recognize good programs.

Lest I sound too cynical, let me assure the reader that working in government as a subcabinet officer was one of the most exciting experiences of my life. One of the joys of my job was visiting exemplary schools around the country, where enthusiastic teachers and principals showed what dedication could accomplish. I will never forget, for example, San Francisco’s Mission High School, where inner-city children were solving difficult math problems based on Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Pit and the Pendulum”; or the Wesley Elementary School in Houston, where first-graders, who were mainly poor and black, demonstrated a command of English grammar that was better than that of many graduate students I had taught.

The Government Culture

Learning about the culture of the federal government was, of course, a revelation. Even before I was sworn in, I encountered the ethics rules.

Despite the popular perception, the rules for the executive branch—when observed—are rigorous. As a presidential appointee, I was told that I had to resign from every organization that I belonged to and recuse myself from any relationship with any organization in which I had participated during the previous five years. Every source of my income had to be revealed and was carefully scrutinized by the department’s ethics lawyers. I resigned my memberships in various professional associations, and I sold my 100 shares of Time Warner stock (because the department made decisions affecting textbook publishers and educational technology). Furthermore, I was not permitted to accept any gifts, or to allow anyone to pick up the check for a meal, or to keep the frequent-flyer miles accrued while traveling on government business. And the only outside income that I could legally accept (other than dividends and interest) was royalties from books.

It did gall me that neither members of Congress nor their staffs lived by the same ethics rules that governed executive branch officers. People “on the Hill” sought any opening to criticize members of the administration on ethics issues, but they themselves were free to accept money (campaign contributions), meals, vacations, and gifts from lobbyists.

My Agency’s Work

The agency that I ran, OERI, had some 500 employees and a budget of about \$450 million. The most valuable part of the agency is the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), which collects statistics about education; it is well respected for its professionalism. OERI was also in charge of research centers, library programs, dissemination of public information about research and practice, and dozens of miscellaneous small programs related to teacher education, technology, gifted children, civic education, drug education, school health, teacher training in the South Pacific, and so on.

When I discovered that so many small programs were assigned to OERI, my first impulse was to ask,

"Why is the federal government doing this? Whom does it help? Does it make a difference?" I told OERI staff to ask these questions before they sent up proposals for funding. In short order I learned that there was no money to evaluate programs that Congress had authorized and funded for years; the career staff knew that I could raise questions but could not cut off funding to programs, regardless of their quality. Each year the administration tried to "zero out" many of them, but it was a waste of time. Almost every program had a lobbyist, a bevy of nonprofit groups that received federal funding and lobbied for more, and a congressional friend.

A major part of the agency's budget was devoted to nearly a score of relatively small university-based research centers and 10 "regional education laboratories." The centers and labs, as they were known, constituted the heart of the department's modest commitment to education research and development. Created during the Great Society years, the centers and labs were supposed to herald a new day in American education, as researchers unlocked the secrets of learning and shared their wealth with the nation's schools. That never happened, of course, and there was widespread feeling in Washington that education research had been a dismal failure.

Education researchers believed, with some justification, that the failure was owing to a lack of federal funding; a report published by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) during my term in office recommended a vast increase in federal spending on education research. But research funding dried up for two reasons: first, because the Democratic majority in Congress never trusted a Republican administration with control of the education research agenda; and second, because many members of both parties were deeply suspicious of the value of any education research, believing that the field produced mainly useless gobbledygook (sometimes they were right).

The regional education laboratories were a special puzzle. The

labs maintained a lobbying organization in Washington that was run by an energetic woman who had previously worked for a senior Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee. The labs also had powerful friends in the Senate, including Republican Senator Mark Hatfield, who has a lab in his state. Each year, at appropriations time, the labs' funding was guaranteed, but the rest of OERI's budget was not. In fact, I found myself courting the labs' lobbyist, trying to get her to intercede on behalf of the rest of the agency's budget. That was a waste of time, I might add; the labs never did anything for any other part of the agency and fought fiercely only to enhance their own budgets.

Like other federal programs, the labs were always on the lookout for new pots of money, and it was easy to spot their thumbprints on new education proposals. If the appropriate bill said that the funds were to be awarded to 10 regional competitors, everyone knew that the money was intended for the labs. For example, when Senator Hatfield decided that the nation needed 10 regional mathematics and science centers (\$12 million annually for the lot), a national competition was conducted, and—surprise!—the labs won all 10 contracts.

Republican Senator Nancy Kassebaum's education staff assistant was greatly enamored of the labs, and she decided that the labs should receive an additional \$30 million annually to train classroom teachers as education researchers. I argued that classroom teachers belonged in the classroom, that the federal government should not promote an exodus of the most talented teachers, that there were many other agencies better qualified to train new researchers, but there was no dissuading her, and into the OERI budget went another plum earmarked for the labs.

Encounters with Congress And the Bureaucracy

My encounters with Congress were frequently disheartening and sometimes painful. The senators and their staffs were always cordial and straightforward, even to a representative of the Bush administration, in part because of their courtly tradition but also perhaps because they had occasionally been out of power.

I had only one startling encounter with a Democratic staffer from the Senate, a man who was customarily nonpartisan. Both of us were invited to address a gathering of the teachers and principals of the year on the subject of the federal role in education. I discussed the national educa-

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SCHOLAR IN WASHINGTON

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tion goals and the importance of establishing standards. He gave a stemwinder, flailing at the Republicans and listing the multimillion-dollar programs that Congress had authorized for principals, school boards, teachers, schools of education, and other deserving recipients.

The only problem was that most of the programs he described had not received a penny of appropriations; nor were they likely to. The promised programs, in short, were nonexistent. The speaker correctly assumed that his listeners would not know that federal programs receive authorization from one congressional committee, and appropriations from another committee, and that programs can be authorized without receiving appropriations.

Dealing with House members and their staffs was a constant ordeal; the majority had been in power continuously for 40 years, and they—especially their staffs—exhibited the arrogance of uncontested power.

The attitude of House members was that they (and they alone) decided every educational issue and the department did their bidding; under no circumstances was the department to have a program that did not emanate from the Democratic majority in Congress. So, for example, when Secretary Alexander awarded competitive grants for teacher-training academies in subject areas (math, science, history, English, geography) without asking for permission first, the House Education and Labor Committee punished the department by cutting millions of dollars in discretionary funds. This activity, they said, was unauthorized by Congress and amounted to “politicization” (anything that they didn’t like was characterized as “politicization,” but nothing that they themselves did—like directing federal funds to their favorite causes or harassing administration officials—ever amounted to “politicization”).

My agency was “up for reauthorization,” meaning that Congress was about to rewrite its charter for the

next five years, and House Democrats had decided to reconstruct it. One congressman, whom I will call Mr. X, headed an oversight committee of one and held the fate of the agency in his hands. Since the agency was his baby, he had grandiose plans for its future. Mr. X had no use for Republicans, and he devised a plan to ensure that the administration would have little to say about the education research agenda in the future.

In his redesign, OERI would be authorized to expend billions of dollars through major research institutes; it would have an extensive network of federal extension agents (like agricultural extension agents) who would bring the latest research findings into inner-city schools; and it would be controlled by a powerful policy-making board that consisted mainly of representatives from organizations that received or sought money from the agency.

I knew that the agency lacked the capacity to staff the research institutes that Mr. X projected; I also disagreed with his proposal to create a powerful board with extensive executive authority and its own large staff. But there was no shaking the congressman’s conviction that the only way to “depoliticize” the agency was to turn control over to the people and organizations that compete for its funding. He called it “a new paradigm.”

I spent many hours visiting members of Congress, trying to find support for an advisory board of distinguished people who—unlike Congressman X’s board—would not have the power to select personnel or to intervene in grant-making decisions. Since no one in Congress cared much about education research, it was hard to stir up interest.

During my time in Washington, Congressman X’s legislation never came to a vote because of opposition from the Senate Democratic staff, who thought it was irresponsible. Mr. X concluded that I was to blame (I was flattered that he thought I could influence the actions of the Senate). For my intransigence, I was rewarded with hostile and persistent scrutiny by Mr. X’s staff. When I hired a hotel room (for \$425) for an agencywide

meeting, with free homemade peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, there were threats of a congressional investigation for misuse of government funds.

In mid-1992, as he grew increasingly frustrated by his inability to pass his legislative reorganization of OERI, Mr. X requested a list of every contract, grant, cooperative agreement, and purchase order for the past year. We sent the list. Then he requested the same information for 1990 and 1991. Then he requested specific details of every proposal that did not get funded, reviewers’ comments, and résumés of reviewers—literally thousands of pages. It was a fishing expedition, intended to harass the agency, at a huge cost in staff time and taxpayers’ dollars.

About the bureaucracy, I continue to have mixed feelings. Many of the career employees worked very hard and very effectively; the leaders of the agency included people who were as smart and capable as anyone I had met in private life. Some are now my friends. The able members of the career staff were usually as frustrated as I. There were also highly paid employees (in the salary range from \$80,000 to \$110,000 annually) who did nothing at all, ever, and it was impossible either to remove them or to get them to do any work.

An Emphasis on Publications

As head of OERI, I tried to emphasize quality and publications. I rejected sloppy reports and on several occasions withheld funding (at least

This article is adapted from a much longer one published in the American Scholar (Autumn 1995). Back copies are available for \$3.50 each from the American Scholar, Phi Beta Kappa, 1811 Q Street NW, Washington, DC 20009.

Diane Ravitch is senior research scholar at New York University and nonresident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. Her latest book, National Standards in American Education: A Citizens’ Guide, was published in 1995 by the Brookings Institution.

temporarily) from projects whose leaders were unable to explain their work in plain English; some tried to improve, but others went to their congressman to demand a restoration of their funding.

During my brief time in office, the agency produced a steady stream of publications whose purpose was to demystify education research. Among these were a series of brief "consumer guides" explaining research findings, booklets for parents who wanted to help their children, and a historical summary of statistics about education. Achieving this level of productivity required constant pressure and nagging, because the agency was accustomed to moving at a snail's pace.

Managing Federal Grant Competitions

One of the agency's continuing responsibilities was the management of competitions for federal grants. It worked like this: Congress would appropriate funds for a new educational program or activity; then someone at OERI would write up a description of what the funds were for and advertise a request for proposals in the *Federal Register* or *Commerce Business Daily*, which are carefully read by grant hunters and lobbyists; proposals would be submitted; a peer-review panel would read them and make recommendations; and I, as assistant secretary, would sign the recommendation to the secretary to award funding to the winning proposal.

I never knew who the peer reviewers were, nor did I pick them; this meant that the career staff exercised enormous power over decision making, and they tended to defer to familiar names in the leadership cadre of education organizations.

In 1992 Congress directed the department to award a five-year grant for \$25 million to establish a center for information about mathematics and science education. When I learned about this, I was surprised because there was already a federally funded center with this purpose at Ohio State University. But ours was not to wonder why, so a competition was held, and there were two com-

petitive proposals. The peer reviewers favored the proposal from Ohio State University. So now there were two federal centers on the same campus with the same purpose!

The most controversial competition of my tenure demonstrates the way the system works (or, in this case, did not work); it was the only time that I rejected the recommendation of the peer reviewers. A Republican congressman from Michigan wanted to put some money into the department's budget for his district, which was laying expensive fiber-optic cable. But the House Appropriations Committee wouldn't let him earmark funds for his district, so he wrote into the Department of Education's appropriations bill that there was to be a competition for a single award of up to \$6 million for a high-technology demonstration project. We advertised the competition and received 110 proposals.

Eventually, the results of the competition ended up on my desk, and I read the winning proposal. It did not come from the congressman's district (which ranked far down on the list). It came from a state department of education, and the applicants proposed to add the money to a continuing statewide technology program; it was a grandiose proposal that claimed it would wire everybody and solve every educational problem in the state, but it lacked specifics about implementation. I called in the staff and said that I thought this was a poor proposal and that it would demonstrate nothing at all. Several days later they brought back another recommendation, this time from another state; this proposal had more specifics than the first one, but it did not look like the "demonstration" project that the legislation called for.

The day after I made the decision internally not to make the award to either proposal, with no public announcement, the secretary's office received calls from the office of a very important Democratic senator. His staff had heard that his state had won the award but that I was giving it to someone else. (Actually, his state was second choice, not first.) His staff director told me that they suspected political interference from the White

House. The secretary's office wanted to know what was going on. I responded that, for more than a year, I had signed my name to one worthless award after another; this time I was not going to sign my approval unless there was a project that seemed worth \$6 million. That made everyone nervous.

I decided to do an internal review of the top-ranking proposals. I asked several key staff members to read the six highest-ranking proposals, and we met to discuss them. We decided that we would do what we thought was the right thing, which was to pick the best proposal and hang the political consequences. We decided that the best proposal came from a little school district in McKinney, Texas, which proposed to convert a school into a high-technology center, where there would be 250 students, a teacher-training center, and community access to the center six days a week. At least, we thought, this really would provide a demonstration of the uses of high technology in education. Unfortunately, McKinney was ranked fourth by the peer-review panel, which meant that three politically powerful applicants would be furious.

As soon as our decision became known, one of the aggrieved senators announced that he was asking for a formal investigation by the General Accounting Office (GAO), on grounds that I had ignored the recommendations of the peer reviewers and made the decision solely to help President Bush win Texas. This was a consideration that quite frankly had never occurred either to me or to my advisers. To make a long story short, after many interviews by an Abbott and Costello team from GAO, I was cleared of nefarious political designs, the money went to McKinney, and the case was closed.

The Gender-Bias Study

Another contretemps occurred by accident. I got a call one day from a reporter, asking what I thought of the newly released gender-bias study by the American Association of University Women (AAUW). I should explain that, as a rule, federal officials

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were not supposed to make spontaneous comments to the press. If I gave a speech or wrote an article, it was supposed to be reviewed and cleared by the secretary's public affairs office, to be sure we were all saying the same things on policy matters. If I were interviewed on the telephone, my liaison from the press office was usually on an extension, presumably to protect me against being misquoted.

But I forgot about the system when a reporter asked about the AAUW report called *How the Schools Shortchange Girls*. The report presented a dreary picture of persistent bias against girls in American schools, allegedly resulting in lowered self-esteem and lowered achievement. I took issue with the report because I had seen data documenting the remarkable improvement in women's educational status between 1970 and 1990.

Jane Pauley of NBC came to interview me, and I knew she was looking for a quote with which to hang me. The interview lasted for half an hour, and I was careful to say the same things over and over again. Whatever she asked, I tried to answer with the data about women's advances in education. But then she said, "Suppose my daughter were in a school where the teachers were horrible to girls, what should I do?" I said, somewhat flippantly (big mistake), "I would put her in a girls' school."

The previous day, I had participated in a research seminar on single-sex education, a rapidly disappearing sector in the United States, and it seemed clear that many girls benefit academically in such settings. So I felt comfortable suggesting single-sex education as an alternative to Jane Pauley, and of course that 15-second exchange was the only part of the interview included in a program that documented how girls were the victims of grievous gender bias in American schools. Soon after the Pauley program was aired, the secretary received a letter signed by more than 50 Democratic senators and congressmen demanding that I be disci-

plined or fired for proposing that girls should be sent to single-sex schools. He laughed.

Standards

The issue that brought me to Washington was standards, and I spent most of my time promoting the importance of them. American students don't work very hard in school; there are no consequences attached to schoolwork, neither rewards for good work nor sanctions for poor work. Motivated students, driven either by their own inner fires or their parents' ambitions, pursue excellence; the great majority know that little is expected of them. Part of the mission of Alexander's team in the department was to make the country aware that changes in the economy demanded higher educational attainment by young people.

We were impressed by the apparent success of the standards promulgated by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, which had been developed without federal support and which were being used in about 40 states. In the fall of 1991 the president of the NAS, Frank Press, asked Secretary Alexander if the department would be willing to give the

The amount of power that is concentrated in the nation's capital is immense. Only a regular rotation of newcomers with a fresh perspective . . . can restrain and counter the permanent and insular political class that has made Washington its home.

NAS a grant to develop national standards for what American students should know and be able to do in science. The secretary readily agreed, and OERI was responsible for processing and supervising the grant.

This was dangerous ground, because Congress had not authorized the department to make grants for national standards, even voluntary ones, and the department has been prohibited since 1970 from exercising any control over curriculum, in-

struction, administration, or textbooks (a prohibition that is regularly violated).

During the next year, the department—in collaboration with the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the National Endowment for the Arts—also awarded grants to establish standards in history, the arts, civics, geography, English, and foreign languages. In each case, we made the awards to groups that seemed to be the most reputable and inclusive in each field—for example, the National Council for Geographic Education in geography. The English award was made only days before we left office to a tripartite coalition composed of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), the International Reading Association, and the Center for the Study of Reading at the University of Illinois. This was a big gamble, because the director of NCTE had testified before a federal hearing in opposition to standards only a year earlier.

The negotiations took months, and I was never certain whether the leaders of the English profession seriously intended to develop standards, because many resisted even the idea of standard English. As it turned out, people in the field were apparently not ready to commit themselves to real standards for what all students should know and be able to do. In the spring of 1994 the Department of Education canceled the contract for English standards on grounds of lack of progress.

The history standards (especially the American history standards) provoked the greatest controversy. In the fall of 1991, the department and NEH made a grant to the National Center for History in the Schools at the University of California at Los Angeles to arrive at a consensus on national history standards. I knew that the effort to forge history standards would be rife with minefields, but I expected that it could be done because of my own experience in drafting the California history curriculum, which balanced the claims of multiculturalism and the common culture and which placed the democratic idea at the center of the history

curriculum. The UCLA center had been launched by Lynne Cheney, NEH's chairman.

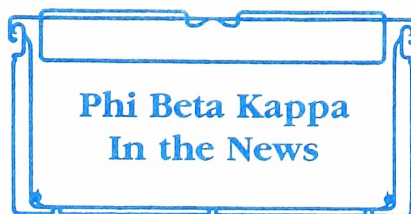
Publication of the standards in the fall of 1994 set off a war of words; many critics, led by Cheney, attacked them; the U.S. Senate voted 99 to 1 to express its disapproval of them. The earnest effort by the writers of the standards to deemphasize traditional heroes like George Washington and Thomas Edison and to discover little-known heroes who were not white males set off a furor that has not yet died down.

It is too soon to say that the attempt to promote national standards was a failure. Some of the efforts, especially the standards in civics, geography, and the arts, have won praise for their intellectual rigor. I know that if I had to do it all over again, I would have insisted on different elements in the contracts.

Conclusion

When I left government, I felt sad about "striking the set," as the team with which I had worked closely for 18 months disbanded. I knew that I would miss not only the group that Lamar Alexander had pulled together, but the people with whom I had worked in OERI. In the academic world, I had never had that sense of comradeship, of striving together with a large group to reach a goal. For a few months after I left, people would ask, "Did you accomplish anything?" And I would talk about the publications, none of them earthshaking, and about the efforts to make the idea of standards palatable to educators, which was a matter of conviction.

Do I regret working in Washington? Not a bit. What I learned is not in any of the textbooks; for some kinds of knowledge, there is no substitute for experience. My faith in the two-party system is stronger than ever, because I learned the value of turnover. The amount of power that is concentrated in the nation's capital is immense. Only a regular rotation of newcomers with a fresh perspective, with an intention to go home someday, and with an undiminished capacity for outrage, can restrain and counter the permanent and insular political class that has made Washington its home. ■



New York Times Weighs In On Phi Beta Kappa's 'Image Problem'

In a half-page article published in the *New York Times* on May 26, 1996, Emily M. Bernstein recapitulated the now widely publicized acceptance rate story and reported comments from students and faculty at the University of Connecticut, which had a 45 percent rejection rate this year.

Bernstein found that many students at that university had already joined several other honor societies before they received Phi Beta Kappa's invitation, and they simply resisted paying an initiation fee for an organization with which they were unfamiliar. A female senior who turned down Phi Beta Kappa after joining three other societies told Bernstein, "It's a matter of who gets to you first." A female junior who also rejected Phi Beta Kappa said, "I've joined several other honor societies that seem better known. I don't know if this one is well known or not."

Another female junior to whom the chapter had planned to offer a scholarship said, "I hadn't heard of it before. I guess I should have, but there isn't much advertising or publicity. The letter said it was the first Greek society from 1776 or whatever, but then at the bottom it asked for \$35. I was a little skeptical."

Two male students were quoted as saying, "I don't think anybody is going to hire or fire me because I belong to Phi Beta whatever" and "They're basically résumé-builders. You get nothing out of it and you really don't put anything into it."

Bernstein noted that Phi Beta Kappa is not mentioned in the University of Connecticut's student activities book and that the campus newspaper did not publish the list of invitees sent in by the chapter.

Bernstein then discussed the efforts under way by Society leaders to counteract the Society's image problem, including the conference in New York City being planned for October by, among others, Arline Bronzaft, who chairs the group of 50 alumni associations nationwide. [See page 1 of this *Key Reporter*.] Bernstein quoted Bronzaft as saying, "Why don't [the invitees] make an effort to inquire? That's the mark of an educated person."

'That Elusive Phi Beta Key'

Writing in the *News & Record* (Greensboro, N.C.) of May 29, 1996, columnist

Rosemary Yardley described herself as "dumfounded" at the *New York Times's* story that some students had never heard of Phi Beta Kappa while others viewed it as an anachronism:

How could today's crop of Phi Beta Kappa candidates be so smart and yet so stupid? And, yes, arrogant.

Back in my college days, induction into Phi Beta Kappa was hot stuff, the cat's meow, a coveted honor stingily bestowed on the academic crème de la crème.

Membership was duly noted on résumés (and usually got "Phi Betes" good jobs).

It was mentioned in newspaper wedding announcements (and tactfully told readers you had brains).

But most important, it was personal validation that you had worked hard and performed with excellence in college. It was self-confirmation you could carry inside your head for the rest of your life.

And if you wanted to go public about it, there was always the gold Phi Beta Kappa key.

'Phi Beta Kappa Key Opens Doors'

Calling the *New York Times's* report on students' refusal to join Phi Beta Kappa "the Most Amazing News Story of the Year," contributing editor and former managing editor James Ahearn (*The Record*, Hackensack, N.J., early June) described his own experience in reviewing job applications. After years of trying to distinguish promising candidates by their résumés, he concluded:

One line always caught my attention: membership in Phi Beta Kappa, the intercollegiate society that recognizes superior scholarship. Only 10 percent of colleges have Phi Beta chapters. Only 1 percent of college seniors are invited to join the Society each year.

The reviewing panel at each college with a chapter looks at transcripts to make sure that students have taken courses in the liberal arts and sciences, in a broad array of subjects, and at an advanced level. Their studies must include math and a foreign language.

So Phi Beta Kappa membership signifies, first, that the person can think, and, second, that he or she is willing to work hard.

There is no better credential for a career in a field like journalism, where a reporter may one day have to figure out an intricate tax package

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ΦBK IN THE NEWS

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and the next day cope with cancer-cluster data.

Acknowledging that he himself had not made Phi Beta at Amherst, Ahearn contrasted the situation at Amherst and at Ivy League schools, where Phi Beta Kappa is still "big deal," with the indifference on the University of Connecticut campus reported in the *Times's* story.

Their parents may not be familiar with Phi Beta Kappa, but you would think that the students would have heard of it by senior year and would know that being invited to join is a real honor.

As for the initiation fee, whether it is \$35 or \$50, no investment a young person can make offers a similar return. Whatever he or she tries to do in later life, that ΦBK tag will be a standout credential to a prospective employer or to a graduate-school admissions dean.

Chicago Public Radio Broadcasts Interview On 'Lost Cachet'

On April 9, 1996, WBEZ, the public radio station in Chicago, broadcast an interview with Betsy Vandercook, co-secretary of the Phi Beta Kappa chapter at the University of Illinois, Chicago, and Christopher Shea, author of the *Chronicle of Higher Education's* "Lost Cachet?" article (see *Key Reporter*, Spring 1996).

The program opened with taped comments by students at Northwestern and DePaul Universities (only one of 16 questioned knew what Phi Beta Kappa is) and proceeded to a discussion of the Society's image problem on large campuses. Vandercook noted that the problem on her campus was long-standing, and that this year was no different from previous years, even though, as an experiment, the chapter had reduced the fee for all initiation expenses, including the dinner, from \$40 to \$10. Students, she said, told her they just didn't have time to attend a dinner.

'Phi Beta, huh?'

Prompted by Duke University President Nan Keohane's letter to the *Key Reporter* (Winter 1995/96) that "we can no longer take for granted that the initials of our Society carry their own weight by the very utterance," *Charlotte Observer* staff writer Pam Kelley investigated opinions at Carolina institutions (April 29, 1996).

She found that some students on larger campuses dismiss the organization as elitist, don't know what it is, or object to

paying a one-time initiation fee. She quoted one University of South Carolina senior who declined to join as saying, "If you have to pay to join something that's supposed to honor you because of your grades, I don't think you should join." (Kelley commented that most other college honor societies charge an initiation fee of \$50 or more.)

Noting that some institutions such as Davidson College and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro have 100 percent acceptance rates, and that Duke reports only about one refusal a year, Kelley reported that North Carolina State University and the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, had 93 and 94 percent acceptance rates this year.

She also found that the University of South Carolina, which generally reports about 65 percent acceptance, had an 80 percent acceptance rate this year—an improvement attributed to "better efforts to clue in students about the Society." Moreover, the university's president, John Palms, himself a member, now sends each student a letter of congratulation.

Newsweek Joins the Crowd

In two paragraphs headed "Phi Beta Kappa: The honor society gets rejection letters" (May 20, 1996), *Newsweek* briefly recapitulated the story publicized here and elsewhere over the past year.

Is This the Answer? N.Y. Firm Proposes Ad For Campus Newspapers

99% of You Aren't Good Enough!
The Remaining 1%...

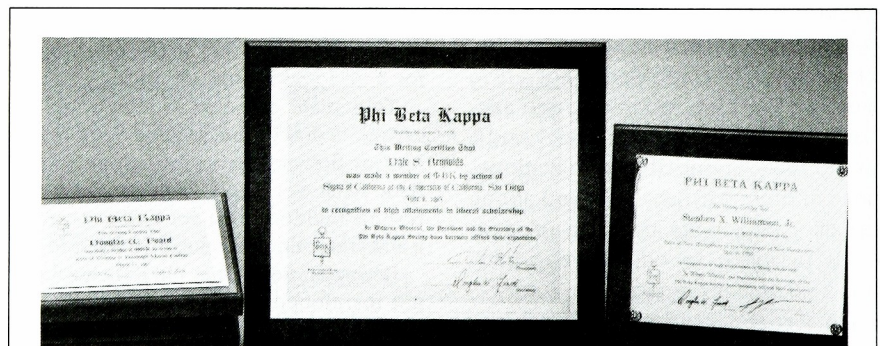
Don't Call Us, We'll Call You!

PHI BETA KAPPA

'The Steel Magnolia'

Writing in *Newsweek* (May 27, 1996), Eleanor Clift noted that Elizabeth Dole had been both May queen and a member of Phi Beta Kappa at Duke University (1958), and described her as Bob Dole's "poised, articulate, not-so-secret campaign weapon."

[If Dole is elected president, his wife will be only the second ΦBK first lady, Eleanor Roosevelt having been elected an honorary member by Radcliffe College in 1941.]



Cherry Box, Plaques Now Available

Four kinds of mounted metal replicas of your Phi Beta Kappa membership certificate are now available:

1. 7½" × 5¾" × 2" cherry box for desk or coffee table, brass matted, \$75.
2. 8" × 10" stainless steel plaque, solid walnut base, \$75.
3. 11" × 13" brass-matted stainless steel plaque, solid walnut base, \$95.
4. 11" × 13" brass-matted stainless steel plaque, black base, \$95.

Check the item you want and send your name, chapter, initiation date, and shipping address (no P.O. boxes, please), plus a check for the appropriate amount made payable to Massillon Plaque Company, P.O. Box 2539, North Canton, OH 44720. All prices include postage and handling if shipped in the continental United States. Ohio residents are subject to 5.75 percent sales tax. If you prefer to pay by **Visa or MasterCard**, telephone (800) 854-8404 and ask for the Phi Beta Kappa Order Department. Allow 3 weeks for delivery. A portion of all proceeds will be used to support Phi Beta Kappa's programs.

For keys, replacement certificates, or other items, call Phi Beta Kappa directly at (202) 265-3808.

Letters to the Editor

So the problem is that qualified students either do not know what Phi Beta Kappa is or choose not to accept the invitation extended to them to join? Surely this cannot be a surprise to anyone who reads the newspapers or looks at current anecdotes and narratives about university life in America.

After all, what are we to expect of students who no longer take foreign languages—let alone the “dead” classical languages? Should we be surprised that the symbols Φ , B , and K mean nothing to them?

And since they no longer are required to take history courses, why should we hope that they somehow have stumbled on American colonial history, heard of the founding of American universities, and seen how ΦBK fits into the history of early Virginia and the history of American education?

And since standards of excellence, indeed, the very idea of excellence, have been diluted and held up to scorn by at least three decades of fashionable leveling, why should our students respect excellence, know it when they see it, and choose to identify themselves with arbiters (old-fashioned, no doubt) such as ΦBK ?

I offer no solution, but just a thought: ΦBK , besides offering Teacher Institutes, Book Awards, and Visiting Scholar programs, might take on the task of being a pressure group, a lobby of sorts, to get our universities back to doing what they should be doing.

*Lawrence J. Clipper
Jupiter, Fla.*

I retired six years ago after 22-plus years of teaching high school Latin, French, etc. I feel sure that my being a Phi Beta Kappa helped me get that and a couple of other jobs; however, I soon found that I was not comfortable wearing my key to school or to school-related social events.

Liberal arts graduates are all too rare in the public schools, and therefore are rarely available as role models for the students. Not only must the Society figure out how to reach freshmen, as President Blitzer states, but it also must figure out how to reach high school juniors, and perhaps even sixth-graders.

*Dorothy Langellier Scott Gibbs
Estes Park, Colo.*

I was shocked to read about Phi Beta Kappa's “Lost Cachet.” Perhaps the students who turn down membership in our prestigious society could learn from Congressman Wes Cooley of eastern Oregon, who campaigned using a résumé, it was discovered recently, filled with lies, including saying that he had been elected to Phi Beta Kappa.

On a personal note, 33 years after my election at Brown University, Phi Beta Kappa helped me get a wonderful job. My new employer told me that once he saw Phi Beta Kappa on the résumé, he ignored all my other qualifications and experience and decided I was the only person for the position. And he admitted that he always wished he had done well enough in college to become Phi Beta Kappa!

*Judith Weiss Cohen
Pawtucket, R. I.*



When I was about eight, I read one of those end-of-the-article anecdotes in the *Reader's Digest* which referred to a Phi Beta Kappa key. I learned right then how important it was to my mother. I still remember, as a high school student, seeing my first real key. While I seldom wear my key received (at Florida State University) in 1957, I am proud of what it represents in my life. Phi Beta Kappa, like college itself, is far more than making good grades or preparing for a career. Educational programs create a formative experience for a growing person, just as gestation precedes birth and early education leads on to greater opportunities for development. Education is the consolidation of what it means to learn and to know, not just to live, but to thrive.

How can a student spend four years at an institution with a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa and not know what it is? Where were all the professors and alumni who could have defined Phi Beta Kappa to them? Who didn't teach them the value of study, the joy of learning, and the reward of doing a good job within a stated time frame? Who wasted the glorious opportunities to do precisely what universities and colleges are designed to do?

I wish for these young people the opportunity to rethink their decision to reject Phi Beta Kappa and, instead, accept it for the joy and responsibility it celebrates in their lives. And I wish for Phi Beta Kappa alumni to take swift and positive action in teaching next year's graduates what it's all about.

*Edna Runnels Ranck
Madison, N.J.*

Recent publication in the *Key Reporter* of “Rates of Acceptance” of students invited to join the Society, as well as letters addressing this issue, have relieved me of the burden of a perceived “failure” on my part many years ago. Although I accepted an invitation to join the Society (University of Pennsylvania, 1959), my hesitancy in responding has bothered me for these many years. As I came to recognize more clearly the importance of the Society, I also came to feel increasingly guilty for having hesitated in reaching my decision. Fortunately, the matter-of-fact way in which my friends who were members stated that the invitation should be accepted was recognized as a clear indication of the course to be taken. However, for decades I have been embarrassed to know how close I came to making an error.

The Phi Beta Kappa Society certainly was an organization known to me for its recognition of academic excellence. At that time even the general public invoked “Phi Beta Kappa” the way the expression “rocket scientist” is used today. But the fee in 1959 was \$25, a figure that meant a great deal to a scholarship student. Because I had a limited view of the significance of this “fraternity,” I was inclined to save my cash.

Now I am relieved to know that I was not unique. As clearly stated in the *Key Reporter*, many others decide not to join, and surely there are many more who hesitate as I did before making the correct decision. With the passing years those who do not join may come to feel that they have made a serious error. I am very grateful to those who brought up this subject in the *Key Reporter*, and to those who are taking steps to apprise students of the honor and the benefits of membership. This discussion has done me a great service, and may provide an even greater service to others invited to join.

*Marshall Joseph Becker
West Chester, Pa.*

RECOMMENDED READING

B O O K C O M M I T T E E

Humanities: Svetlana Alpers, Frederick J. Crosson, Michael Griffith, Simon McVeigh, Robert P. Sonkowsky, Eugen Weber

Social Sciences: Louis R. Harlan, Thomas McNaugher, Catherine E. Rudder, Anna J. Schwartz

Natural Sciences: Ronald Geballe, Russell B. Stevens

Simon McVeigh

The Romantic Generation. Charles Rosen. Harvard, 1995. \$39.95.

In the epilogue to *The Classical Style* Rosen gave a tantalizing glimpse of his ideas on early romanticism; now these ideas are filled out in a book of prodigious insight that has already established itself as another classic. It is not a history—there is nothing (curiously) on German romantic opera—but, rather, a remarkably stimulating and subtle analysis of the essence of romanticism, mainly through illuminating responses to individual works. Rosen concentrates on the great pianist-composers (a CD of Rosen's own performances of Chopin, Schumann, and Liszt accompanies the book). Schumann—especially the visionary, irrational, fantastical Schumann—emerges as the essential romanticist, and his music appropriately frames the book.

In the fine opening chapters Rosen not only discourses on typical themes (ruins, landscapes, memories), but also shows how the romantic fragment intensifies into larger forms. The extensive central section on Chopin is more analytical, arguing for the overriding influence of Bach on his sense of line, and rehabilitating Chopin as a master of form (reinventing classical procedures, not just imposing stereotypes). But through all of this, the poetry, the magic of the music, is never lost—quite the reverse, for Rosen remarkably inspires readers to feel they know and love this music even more than they thought they could. Warmth and heartfelt enthusiasm communicate from every page.

Rosen's pugnacious style is not to everyone's taste. There are the familiar vituperative blasts at easy targets like Mendelssohn, the usual *ex cathedra* judgments and aphorisms ("Liszt's late works are admirable and minor; the early works are vulgar and great"). And with lordly independence Rosen flies in the face of several concerns of modern musicology. But this is a book to return to for years to come.

Intimate Letters: Leoš Janáček to Kamila Stösslová. Tr. by John Tyrrell. Princeton, 1994. \$35.

The tender and revealing correspondence of the lonely composer to a woman nearly 40 years his junior, the inspiration for many of his last and greatest works. This is the first publication in English of these letters, which were suppressed until 1990.

Shostakovich: A Life Remembered. Elizabeth Wilson. Princeton, 1994. \$35.

A compendium of reminiscences, organized as a chronological biography. Some derive from printed sources, but there is much fascinating new material from Shostakovich's friends and colleagues, including Rostropovich (who incidentally casts doubt on Volkov's *Testimony*, the composer's supposed memoirs). Other questions remain, but this balanced book gives new insight into Shostakovich's apparent dual life as dissident and apologist, and, reserved as he was, into his character—the sardonic humor, the abundant nervous energy, and the profound humanity.

Late Idyll: The Second Symphony of Johannes Brahms. Reinhold Brinkmann. Harvard, 1995. \$49.95.

An attempt to place Brahms's second symphony, usually regarded as an "unproblematical" work, in a broader musical and intellectual history, focusing on the ideas of melancholy that threaten the image of the pastoral idyll.

Thomas McNaugher

A Democracy at War: America's Fight at Home & Abroad in World War II. William L. O'Neill. Harvard, 1993, \$24.95; paper, 1995, \$16.95.

In a twist on Clausewitz's notion that "war is the continuation of politics by other means," O'Neill shows how much America's participation in World War II was a continuation of the ways and means of its politics and social mores. The lessons here are shrewdly drawn, often controversial, but generally well and wisely argued. For example, O'Neill doc-

uments the cost to the war effort of discrimination against women and minorities, especially African Americans, who were underdrafted and usually assigned to service units rather than to combat units despite an overall shortage of manpower. The nation paid a "bloody price" as well for Roosevelt's willingness to let interservice rivalry dictate a wasteful two-war strategy in the Pacific.

Meanwhile, the nation's misplaced fascination with high-tech air power, O'Neill argues, led it to incinerate cities and civilians in both Europe and Asia in a strategic bombing campaign that contributed little to the war. While documenting political cynicism or ineptness, O'Neill also captures the vitality and resilience of America's pluralism, concluding that "the strengths of America far outweighed its defects" (p. 433). A stunning, eminently readable contribution to American military, political, and social history.

Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity. Francis Fukuyama. Free Press, 1995. \$25.

In his best-selling *The End of History and the Last Man* (Free Press, 1992), Francis Fukuyama argued that societies head toward liberal, capitalist democracy as a final form of organization. Here he introduces culture to explain why social and economic differences nonetheless persist among capitalist democracies. Varying amounts and kinds of social capital—the ability to associate, to trust beyond the self and the immediate family—help explain why the "Asian economic miracle" takes different forms in different East Asian countries, for example, and why French and German economic structures differ markedly in scale and flexibility. This book defines a much-needed middle ground between the neoclassical economists' rational individual and the revisionists' state-run capitalism; sociability and trust mediate the harshness of individual selfishness while they shape the effects of state intervention. More subtle and empirical than *The End of History*, *Trust* is ultimately more satisfying and compelling—whether or not you think History is over!

Ronald Geballe

The Story of Astronomy. Lloyd A. Motz and Jefferson Hane Weaver. Plenum, 1995. \$28.95.

Astronomy has passed through several phases during the years of human existence. The ancients, whose universe was divided into land, water, and sky, were astute observers; they found the great regularities in the motions above them

and passed on lore in the form of tables and calendars. Regularities cried for explanation; the Greeks tried by inventing conceptual models of a rational order not based on the predilections of gods. They were not free from preconceptions, which restricted the tools available to them. In the 2nd century A.D., Ptolemy developed an elaborate mathematical scheme to predict motions of the sun, moon, and planets based on combinations of circular motions. His scheme satisfied both the dominant theology in Europe and practical affairs until the arrival of the Renaissance and the recognition that the heavens were subject to unmistakable irregularities such as newly appearing stars.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, astronomy gained an entirely new outlook as the careful observer Tycho Brahe, the impassioned mathematician Johannes Kepler, the inquisitive innovator Galileo Galilei, and the unparalleled synthesizer Isaac Newton brought it down to a realm well within the reach of earthly grasp. Since then, advances have been made by astronomers and many others whose inventions in instrumentation and in theory have had important astronomical consequences. Today, laboratory experiments on subatomic particles and the emerging theories of such particles affect the thinking of cosmologists and vice versa. The "story" advanced by the authors of this book is told entertainingly, pays welcome attention to the personalities of the actors, and is open to all.

A Short History of the Universe. *Joseph Silk. Scientific American Library, 1994. \$32.95.*

Gravity's Fatal Attraction: Black Holes in the Universe. *Mitchell Begelman and Martin Rees. Scientific American Library, 1996. \$32.95.*

These are authoritative, complementary, well-written, and well-illustrated works intended for the general reader who wants to learn about the evidence for present-day views of the origin and history of the only universe we know. They deal with the reciprocal relationship between fundamental particle physics and cosmology that we now recognize as teaching us about both. Requiring thoughtful reading and very likely rereading but little mathematical background, they are worth the effort.

Color and Light in Nature. *David K. Lynch and William Livingston. Cambridge Univ., 1995, \$69.95; paper, \$29.95.*

Inspired by the classic 50-year-old treatment by M. G. J. Minnaert, this book is a clearly written, beautifully illustrated

guide to the optical phenomena visible in the open to the naked eye. Shadows, sunlight, the blue sky, water drops, ice crystals, halos, sun, moon, planets and more are described and explained, as well as cameras and the phenomena of vision itself.

The Same and Not the Same. *Roald Hoffmann. Columbia, 1995. \$34.95.*

Chemistry is the world of molecules; molecules make up what our senses experience directly. Hoffmann, chemist and poet, asks of chemistry more than is usual; he seeks a link between chemists and nonchemists. The world of molecules that he describes connects with psychology and mythology through "identity and deception, origins, good and evil, sharing and withholding, resurrection, danger and safety and overcoming obstacles." Dualities are there, in the details of molecular structure and in our need for and fear of chemicals in our environment and lives. The duality of this imaginative work, by a Nobel prizewinner, is that it treats exact detail and emotional response equally.

At the Fringes of Science. *Michael W. Friedlander. Westview, 1995. \$24.95.*

Friedlander has valiantly attempted to deal with a long-standing intractable problem: how to distinguish among science, pseudoscience, and nonscience. He quotes an author from 1852, "Some delusions, though notorious to all the world, have subsisted for ages . . . the belief in omens and divinations of the future . . . which seem to defy the progress of knowledge to eradicate them entirely from the popular mind." And, another, from 1873, holding that science "is so little appreciated by the world at large that even men of culture may still be found to boast of their indifference to it."

Some of our newspapers devote a column, or even a page, once a week to science, but almost all print every day a horoscope. To be sure, there is always a fringe to mainstream science; some of these threads will eventually lead to genuine advance while others will trail into nothingness. Science for good reason is generally skeptical about observations and theories that fly in the face of the well-established, and genuine science will eventually recognize those that add to knowledge. But examples of pseudoscience and nonscience are still with us (e.g., UFOs, the prediction of a major earthquake in 1990, ESP), and the general public all too often cannot distinguish them from genuine science. The author describes how science works and offers suggestions for assessing those claims

that appear first in news media and books for popular consumption.

Svetlana Alpers

Rise of the New Skyscraper: 1865–1913. *Sarah Bradford Landau and Carl W. Condit. Yale, 1996. \$50.*

In the academy these postmodern days, many things that were once taken as evidence of human accomplishment in the arts are, ideologically, suspect. So it is a particular pleasure to read a non-nonsense yet celebratory book like this one on the construction of the first skyscrapers in New York. The authors do not deny that money, desire for prestige, and real estate speculation might have played a bigger role than ideas of stylistic excellence. But, as so often in human affairs, particularly when ambitious architecture is concerned, great ingenuity can accompany great greed.

Combining histories of engineering, land use, law, and architectural style, the authors trace the origins, in the 1880s, of the look and also the life that went to make up the mature New York City. There are many surprises along the way. The word *skyscraper* was first used to describe a tall horse. How very low (to our eyes) were the first buildings that were considered high. There was a time when riding in an elevator was a memorable experience. It was necessary to calculate ways to brace tall structures against huge wind pressures; it was not steel replacing iron but framing versus bearing walls that made skyscrapers possible.

Last but not least, the book's numerous photographs of buildings labeled "demolished" tell the sad tale of how many skyscrapers were destroyed within less than 100 years of their construction. Like all the best historical writing, this book makes the reader newly attentive to the present through a re-creative attention to the past.

Painting and the Journal of Eugène Delacroix. *Michelle Hanoosh. Princeton, 1995. \$39.50.*

Eugène Delacroix was the only 19th-century painter to write at length about the relationship between art and literature. The 900 pages of his *Journal* (written in 1822–24 and 1847–63) are a record of his meditations on the immediacy, presence, and multivalency of what the eye takes in in painting, versus the abstraction of texts. Although not put in this way today, the problem Delacroix took up about the role of the visual and its

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RECOMMENDED READING

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relationship to words remains very much with us.

Hanoosh, editor of the soon-to-be-published definitive French edition, offers the most pertinent and eloquent reading of the *Journals* that I know. Her book concludes with an eye-opening discussion of some of Delacroix's late mural paintings viewed through his writings. Delacroix's understanding of painting and its place in a culture has a compelling density and seriousness.

American Plastic: A Cultural History. Jeffrey I. Meikle. Rutgers, 1995. \$45.95.

The topic of this study is so obvious that I wonder why it has not been done before. American plastic is less circumscribed a topic than the skyscrapers of New York and an account of it cannot be so firm or so conclusive. Here, too, technology and art have both had a role to play. But whereas plastic is a credit to human ingenuity, it is at the same time fake—an artificial substitute for something natural—and hence, suspect.

This historically organized account includes everything from bakelite buttons and radios to nylon stockings and parachutes, formica kitchen counters, potentially deadly polyethylene plastic bags, and the fiberglass and vinyl illusions created by sculptors like Duane Hanson and Claes Oldenburg. While the study of skyscrapers surprises by taking the reader a hundred years back, this study surprises by its modernity. It is remarkable how much of the material fabric and the design-look that we are accustomed to dates only from between World Wars I and II.

Anna J. Schwartz

Against the Tide: An Intellectual History of Free Trade. Douglas A. Irwin. Princeton, 1996. \$29.95.

Fundamentals of U.S. Foreign Trade Policy: Economics, Politics, Laws, and Issues. Stephen D. Cohen, Joel R. Paul, and Robert A. Blecker. Westview, 1996, \$65; paper, \$22.95.

Irwin traces the development of the idea of free trade in the literature leading up to Adam Smith's compelling case for the doctrine in *The Wealth of Nations* and the consolidation of that case in classical economics. He then evaluates eight arguments for protectionism, from the oldest and longest-lived one (the infant-industry argument) to the most recent one (the discovery by economists in the 1980s of strategic trade policy as a

rationale for trade interventions). An attractive feature of the book is the brief biographical entries that accompany photographs of the economists associated with the cases for and against free trade.

The work by Cohen, Paul, and Blecker is a collaborative effort by these three academic specialists in economics, law, and international relations. The book concentrates on the way U.S. trade policy is fashioned and on major contemporary issues, such as trade relations with Japan, the European Union, and nonindustrialized countries as well as NAFTA and the Uruguay Round.

The Worst Tax? A History of the Property Tax in America. Glenn W. Fisher. Univ. Press of Kansas, 1996. \$35.

The property tax the colonists brought from England was a specific levy on specific kinds of property, which favored the powerful. Its replacement by a constitutionally mandated general property tax in the early years of our Republic was the triumph of Jacksonian democratic principles of decentralizing tax power to extract economic resources. The tax was uniformly applied to all property on the basis of value on a specific day, but because the constitutional ideal of equal taxation on all property was hard to implement, the tax eventually became, in many states, a local tax on real estate. The study elucidates this evolution by examining the property tax in Kansas, which entered the Union in the middle of the constitutional uniformity period. Developments there sometimes anticipated developments in older states to the east. The author then assesses the current status of the property tax in the United States, cautioning that the current tax revolt, like earlier ones, will have unforeseen consequences.

The Economics of Organized Crime. Ed. by Gianluca Fiorentini and Sam Peltzman. Cambridge Univ., 1995. \$49.95.

The essays in this conference volume provide two views on the nature of organized crime: (1) as an organization that seeks to govern the underworld by acquiring a rule-making role and (2) as a noncoordinated group of firms dealing with illegal markets. The authors analyze the market behavior of organized crime, reflecting its double nature. In the economic approach, both organized crime and legal governments employ similar tools, such as levying of taxes, restriction of entry into different markets, regulation of the quality of goods, and coercive provision of public goods. Papers on deterrence assess the effect of prohibi-

tion or regulation of illegal commodities and problems in monitoring the efficiency of deterrence agencies. Ironically, the more effective is deterrence, the greater are the incentives to invest in corruption of the deterrence agencies themselves.

Assessing Education Practices: The Contribution of Economics. Ed. by William E. Becker and William J. Baumol. MIT, 1995. \$35.

The essays commissioned for this volume focus on the contributions of economic research to the exploration of issues in education at the precollege level. Examples are school organization, class size, merit pay, and measures of student performance. Although the data that are analyzed are drawn mainly from U.S. sources, teaching experience in Britain and international comparisons of student achievement also are examined. In a chapter on the economics of market choice as the means of generating improvements in educational outcomes, the authors cite recent empirical research to cast doubt on the benefits promised by school choice for at-risk students. According to the editors, the book's conclusions matter less than the introduction it provides to the diversity of economic tools of analysis.

Jean Sudrann

Rule Britannia: Women, Empire, and Victorian Writing. Deidre David. Cornell, 1995. \$15.95.

David's important study of how the politics of Empire defined the changing role of colonial women moves among historical documents and fictions through the rise and fall of the Raj. It not only catches the importance of a precise "historical moment" but also demonstrates how the role of one moment can match and illuminate later positions.

From Emily Eden's letters describing her fear at the silence of a crowd of Indians in New Delhi as they watch a few exuberant Britons celebrating the young Queen Victoria's coronation to Mary Pigot's disruption of the 1882 Church of England Missionary Society fête as she comfortably chats with Babu Kalicharan Bannerjee, David traces these daughters of Empire learning to deal with patriarchy as well as with changing customs that increase their freedom. But she also describes the ambivalence of such popular authors as Dickens, Browning, and Tennyson toward the growing Empire.

In Dickens's *Old Curiosity Shop* (1841), Little Nell's flight from Quilp, a home-grown savage at the heart of Em-

pire, reflects Emily Eden's terrors; seven years later, in *Dombey and Son*, Dickens gives Florence Dombey and Polly Toodles, the nursemaid, not fear but a moral authority that condemns the greed of the colonizers.

When David turns to *Jane Eyre* (1847) she celebrates Brontë's Englishwoman as capable of simultaneously serving and badgering the Raj. As David reads the novel, Bertha Mason, the insane Creole white woman in Jane's attic in rural England, is a colonial torn from her Jamaican world; David attributes Bertha's rage and death to the Rochester family's greed for her fortune, a fortune that enables Rochester's patriarchal style.

When she turns from Bertha Mason to Emilia Gould in Conrad's (1904) *Nostromo*, David defines the colonized woman's role in the same terms of inherited wealth. Emilia, presiding over the restoration of the San Tome silver mine, is as firm as Jane Eyre in her service to Empire and as uneasy as Emily Eden in her nightmares of wrong-doing. Even as Emilia declares her hatred of "silver" she participates in its theft, suggesting the ambivalence of her role as a late-Victorian colonist whose thefts join with ardent desires for moral success.

Writing Ground Zero: Japanese Literature and the Atomic Bomb. *John Whittier Treat. Univ. of Chicago, 1995. \$29.95.*

Treat's extraordinary book traces Japanese literature since the August 1945 bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, from the Japanese "Committee Report" through the testimonial accounts from survivors to the fiction of such writers as Oe Kenzaburo, Ibuse Masuji, and Sata Ineko.

As Treat analyzes the fiction of the postwar generations, he offers a new perspective on the Hiroshima/Nagasaki world and helps us to understand how far fiction's language controls the "truth" perceived by the new generation of storytellers. In discussing Masuji's *Black Rain*, for example, Treat examines the author's discovery of material from actual Hiroshima survivors and his use of diaries of *invented* characters to report on the scene of the blast. Treat also seeks to assess the literature by its moral and humane stance as well as by its literary merit.

Many Auschwitz survivors have been appalled by Treat's comparison of the suffering of the Japanese victims with the suffering victims of the Holocaust, yet in recent essays, Elie Wiesel, Lawrence Langer, George Steiner, and Kenzaburo have compared the two catastrophes.

Book Committee Changes

Earl W. Count and Jean Sudrann have just retired from the *Key Reporter's* Book Committee, and Eugen Weber, Joan Palevsky Professor of Modern European History at the University of California, Los Angeles, and a Phi Beta Kappa senator, has just joined it. Weber is an honorary ΦBK member (UCLA, 1978).

Each of the post-A-bomb writers recognizes the extent to which all have been, in Treat's words, "cornered by history," a Western history of poison gas and machine guns effectively separating the individual soldier from his victim and creating a pursuit of death by victims and victimizers alike, incapable of handling a technology "beyond . . . any one individual's control."

Twentieth-century European survivors, Treat believes, must learn to deal with that historical context; Nobelist Kenzaburo hopes the threat of nuclear arsenals may move us "to consider the fundamental conditions of human existence . . . relevant to the present and to our movement towards all tomorrows."

The Oxford Illustrated History of Theatre. *Ed. by John Russell Brown. Oxford, 1995. \$45.*

This is a fine history by 16 contributors, each with a special interest in some aspect of the theater. The chronological flexibility distinguishing this volume allows the reader to move freely between such diverse offerings as an account of the innovative beginnings of the Italian Renaissance Theatre's *commedia dell'arte* and a discussion of Peter Brook's 20th-century staging of India's epic *Mahabharata*.

Illustrations enrich all four sections, each of which offers commentary on plays and playwrights from Euripedes' *Bacchae* to Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*; on theater structures from ancient Athens to modern London; and on actors' performances, including Isabel Andreinni's mad scene at a Medici wedding in 1859 and Richard Burbage as Hamlet at the Globe.

Sidebars include an account of Beaumarchais's reading from the final act of his *Marriage of Figaro*, condemning the aristocracy just days before the play's opening, and a selection from the Puritan John Stockwood's sermon preached at Paul's Crosse (1578), condemning the theater as a "showplace of all beastly and filthy matters." The sidebars further sup-

port the volume's recognition of the always evolving relationship between the theater and the moral, political, and religious demands of its public.

Russell B. Stevens

Good Natured: The Origins of Right and Wrong in Humans and Other Animals. *Frans de Waal. Harvard, 1996. \$24.95.*

In this, his most recent work, de Waal continues and elaborates themes found in earlier titles such as *Chimpanzee Politics* (1983) and *Peacemaking Among Primates* (1989), both of which have been recommended here previously. As the subtitle of this book indicates, he emphasizes those behaviors that strongly suggest the development in primates, especially chimpanzees, of what might best be called a rudimentary morality. He finds that this morality differs only in degree from that displayed by humans. The presentation is clear, readable, and persuasive.

Science, Nonscience, and Nonsense: Approaching Environmental Literacy. *Michael Zimmerman. Johns Hopkins, 1995. \$25.95.*

In some measure this is two books, one exemplified by the title, the other by the subtitle. The former is a cogent commentary on the essential nature of the scientific enterprise and a scathing denunciation of "nonscience and nonsense." The second, larger, portion addresses several important environmental issues—land use, agricultural chemicals, endangered species, technology, and the like—and provides useful insights and information on the role of science in dealing with them. However, the overall value of these discussions is lessened by the author's unnecessary tendency to castigate those on the "other side" of many controversies.

Redesigning the American Lawn: A Search for Environmental Harmony. *F. Herbert Bormann, Diana Balmori, and Gordon T. Geballe. Yale, 1993. \$13.*

This modest volume deserves to be rated, in the vernacular, a "good try," in the sense that it calls attention to the ecologically unnatural character of the much-sought-after monoculture of the typical American lawn. The authors urge a move toward a mixture of species and a sharp reduction in the application of

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RECOMMENDED READING

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agricultural chemicals. They are predictably critical of the chemical companies, equipment manufacturers, lawn care services, and so on that are essential to the maintenance of the traditional lawn. It is unlikely that there will be wholesale trends toward what the authors choose to call a "Freedom Lawn," but for those so persuaded, this book offers a wealth of practical suggestions.

The Private Life of Plants: A Natural History of Plant Behavior. *David Attenborough. Princeton, 1995. \$26.95.*

Developed in conjunction with a recent six-part video series, this book offers many superb color plates and a fascinating and accurate text. Although this book is a pleasure to examine, it will be somewhat troublesome to botanists, in that Attenborough goes out of his way to attribute to plants an array of animal-like qualities. It is hard to see why this was considered necessary.

The Time before History: 5 Million Years of Human Impact. *Colin Tudge. Scribner/Macmillan, 1996. \$27.50.*

In this work the author effectively stretches the customary notion of human history enormously back into time and in so doing invokes much of the entire span of planet Earth. He gives us, for example, much worthwhile information and insight into the significance of climatic change, tectonic shifts, human and other animal migration, evolution and extinctions, and agriculture. The writing is commendably readable and the book itself first rate, if humbling.

Natural Acts: A Sidelong View of Science and Nature. *David Quammen. Avon Books, 1996. \$11.*

In the first paragraph of his introduction, the author comments on his view of what constitutes "lively writing about science and nature"—and then proceeds to exemplify precisely that quality in a highly miscellaneous collection of essays and commentaries on a bewildering variety of topics. The reader will certainly be intrigued and, willingly or no, informed. These articles are perhaps best read two or so at a sitting, but the temptation to go on to "just one more" is hard to resist.

Lyme Disease: The Cause, the Cure, the Controversy. *Alan G. Barbour. Johns Hopkins, 1996. \$35.95.*

In a way this detailed examination of Lyme disease serves merely as guidance to the relatively few persons who live in

areas infested with the deer tick vector and whose activities bring them into contact with the pathogen. But it deserves, I think, careful study by a much larger audience, for it brings out in commendable fashion the highly complex interplay of factors inherent in dealing with infectious disease. The content is a highly informative template of vector-borne diseases generally, and of the elements of their identification, disease patterns, and therapy.

Louis Harlan

Rich Relations: The American Occupation of Britain, 1942–1945. *David Reynolds. Random House, 1995. \$30.*

This is the first comprehensive treatment of a topic usually dealt with anecdotally and inaccurately. The author is a Cambridge don who has close ties on both sides of the Atlantic and has written several other excellent books on Anglo-American relations. He bridges the barrier of a common language, describes the official policies adopted by the two governments and their armies, makes good use of a remarkable number of surveys and polls, and then details the reality of interpersonal relations between the individual GIs and English men, women, and children (and fewer in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales).

The book proceeds chronologically from the small numbers of 1942 and early 1943 to the very large numbers of the buildup to Normandy, then back to the smaller contingents and briefer stayovers on their way to the Continent. There are separate chapters on "Yanks," "Gals," "Negroes," and "Flyboys," but also chapters on the interrelations of all segments of the U.S. Army and all categories of English people, and on cultural assimilation and culture shock. The story is rounded out by an account of "returning Britain to the British" and the mixed outcomes of wartime sex relations—the bastard offspring, the good marriages and the bad. At the end the author muses about the three pillars of evidence the book has rested on: the official papers, the more personal documentation of letters and diaries, and the belated testimony of memoirs and interviews. He gives some poignant instances of both the potential and the pitfalls of memory. This book is so good I was sorry to finish it.

Cleopatra's Nose: Essays on the Unexpected. *Daniel Boorstin. Ed. by Ruth F. Boorstin. Random House, 1994. \$23.*

The title is taken from Blaise Pascal's speculation on Cleopatra's nose: "Had it been shorter, the whole face of the world would have been changed." These recent

essays are vintage Boorstin. The emeritus Librarian of Congress in these short pieces displays the same wit and insight and clarity of style that characterized his major works celebrating the Americans, the Discoverers, and the Creators.

Here he pursues themes more suitable to the essay form. He extols the virtues of negative discovery, as in Captain James Cook's demonstration by voyage that there was no Great Southern Continent at the bottom of the map. He explores the distinction between discovery and invention and between creativity and discovery. He demonstrates the vital role that printing played in both the creation and the ratification of the U.S. Constitution.

Wisely bypassing political and social history, Boorstin offers fresh insight into the role of the White House and the Capitol in shaping and symbolizing our federal government. He calls machines the fourth kingdom, following the animal, vegetable, and mineral, and shows in many interesting ways how the fourth kingdom follows laws different from those of the natural world and moves in unpredictable directions. He ends with a moving but by no means filiopietistic account of his father, another sui generis original, and an unabashed glorification of America as the Land of the Unexpected.

Also recommended: The Daniel J. Boorstin Reader. *Ed. by Ruth F. Boorstin. Modern Library, 1995. \$20.* This includes large excerpts from *The Americans*, *The Discoverers*, and *The Creators*, and 16 essays, products of a capacious intellect.

Roosevelt's Warrior: Harold L. Ickes and the New Deal. *Jeanne Nienaber Clarke. Johns Hopkins, 1996. \$39.95.*

When Harold Ickes became secretary of the interior in 1933, it apparently surprised everyone, including Ickes. However, he turned out to be one of the most colorful and memorable of the New Dealers, and this book does him justice by careful research and lively writing. As a former leader of the Progressive Party and a champion of civil rights and civil liberties, Ickes played a key role in the New Deal coalition and in the Roosevelt inner circle. He was also a keen observer of the whirligig of politics.

The author has made good use of Ickes's secret diaries and secret memoir to recount both his public battles for worthy causes and a personal life that was "as mixed up as a dog's breakfast." He reformed the Interior Department from its century-long collusion with land-grabbers, cattlemen, and mining interests. He gathered the national parks under a single agency, greatly enlarged the park system,

and engaged in more dubious battle with Henry Wallace over control of the Forest Service, which he sought to move to Interior. As simultaneously head of the Public Works Administration, he had priorities in work relief radically different from those of Harry Hopkins of the Work Projects Administration, leading to another intense rivalry. Ickes eventually made up with both Wallace and Hopkins and remained the head of Interior until after Roosevelt's death.

A highlight of the book is the account of Ickes's leadership in arranging Marian Anderson's concert at the Lincoln Memorial in 1939 and other championship of African Americans and American Indians. The focus is on the years from 1933 to 1940. More on Ickes's early life and a better organized account of his private life would have been welcome.

Silver Rights. *Constance Curry. Algonquin Books/Workman Publishing, 1995. \$21.95.*

In recent civil rights literature, the emphasis has turned to "local people," the persons of color in isolated southern rural communities who took action to claim their "silver rights." This book tells the story of Mae Bertha and Matthew Carter, sharecroppers on a cotton plantation in Sunflower County in the Mississippi Delta, and the 7 youngest of their 13 children who, in 1965, desegregated the previously all-white school system of

Drew, Mississippi. The Carters' older children had had to leave Mississippi in order to gain the limited opportunities that their limited education allowed, but the Carters shared the dream of the civil rights movement and had been members of a local NAACP chapter since 1955. Theirs was the only black family courageous enough to take advantage of the cynical offer of white school officials for "freedom of choice."

The children endured total ostracism and hostility at school, and the parents suffered threats, violence, and job loss, but they persevered. All seven children graduated from high school and went on to "Ole Miss," the state university. This inspiring success story was made possible also by help from a network of civil rights organizations and individuals, including the Rev. Maurice McCrackin of Cincinnati and the author, then a field representative of the American Friends Service Committee in the area who visited the Carters often to lend support and encouragement. This is excellent grass-roots history.

All Over the Map: Rethinking American Regions. *Edward L. Ayers, Patricia Nelson Limerick, Stephen Nissenbaum, and Peter S. Onuf. Johns Hopkins, 1996. \$35; paper, \$13.95.*

The four brilliant essays here, in a little more than a hundred pages, will challenge any reader's regional stereotypes. Onuf's opening essay has interesting in-

sights on the origins of American sectionalism, but the essays on the South, New England, and the West are the heart of the book. I had assumed, for example, until I read Nissenbaum, that the centrally arranged New England village with neat white houses facing a central common was a colonial phenomenon, but I discovered that colonial farmers generally were dispersed out in the countryside, and the compact village developed as a feature of the commercial revolution of the early 19th century. Only those who have never lived in the South could believe that it is America's own banana republic with a distinctive and uniform "southern culture," but even other southerners will learn from Ayers's account of the region's diversity and ambiguity.

And Limerick rescues Western history from nostalgic fixation on the vanishing frontier, the vanishing Indian, and the vanishing cowboy; she gives 10 reasons for seeing the West as a region rather than a frontier process. For example, the West has characteristics of aridity and semiaridity, with a diversity of unvanishing Indians, Chicanos, and Asians as well as whites; a larger presence of the federal government than in other regions; and distinctive problems deriving from the commercial exploitation and boom-and-bust economies of extractive industries. This book is a learning experience for scholars as well as for a wider audience. ■

More Multigeneration ΦBK Families

Harold C. Field; his son, Noel M. Field; and his grandson, Noel M. Field Jr., Brown University, 1894, 1926, and 1956.

Max T. Lampert and Esther Nelson Lampert (husband and wife), University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1925 and 1926; their son, Nelson Lampert, Harvard University, 1954; and Nelson's children, Hope Lampert Burnam, Harvard, 1981, and Thomas Lampert, Stanford University, 1986.

James Lincoln Knapp and his son, Charles L. Knapp, Denison University, 1925 and 1956; and Charles's daughters, Jennifer Knapp Beudert and Liza Knapp, Swarthmore College, 1982 and 1985.

Georgia Lorraine Carr Cox, DePauw University, 1928; her son, L. Hughes Cox, Wabash College, 1953; and Hughes's son, Thomas Hughes Cox, Birmingham-Southern College, 1994. Other ΦBK members in the family include two of Tom's uncles, Walter Thomas Meyer, Wesleyan University, 1965, and George William Horton Jr., Wabash College, 1947; and Tom's three first cousins, elected at Illinois College: Elizabeth Leigh Horton Hilleke, 1983, Geoffrey William Horton, 1986, and Sarah Johanna Horton, 1989.

Gertrude Raffel Schmeidler, Smith College, 1932; her son, James Schmeidler, Yale University, 1961; and his daughter, Sara Schmeidler, Barnard College, 1995.

Rupert T. Pickens Jr., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1925; his wife, Ida Catherine Munyan, Duke University, 1925; their son, Rupert T. Pickens III, and a grandson, Edward Munyan Pickens, UNC, Chapel Hill, 1961 and 1989.

Louis Humphrey Walz, Amherst College, 1929; his daughter, Pauline H. Walz Webb, Washington University, 1960; and Pauline's children, Paul S. Christy and Jennifer Lynn Christy Lee, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1982 and 1984.

Burton Levine, University of Arkansas, 1940; his son, Peter Levine, Union College, 1971; and Burton's granddaughter, Shanon Huggins Gruchot, University of Alabama, 1993.

Mary Lucile Copenhaver Bacon, University of Oregon, 1923; her son, Edgar Allen Bacon Jr., University of California, Berkeley, 1952; and Edgar's daughter, Deborah Suzanne Bacon, College of William and Mary, 1993.

Elizabeth Thomas Fowler and her daughter, Eleanor Fowler McCrickard, Birmingham-Southern College, 1937 and 1961; and Eleanor's son, Keith Andrew McCrickard, University of North Carolina, 1995.

William Hannibal Johnson, Denison University, 1885 graduate, alumnus member, 1911; his son, Alfred Janney Johnson, Denison, 1918; and Alfred's children, William Warren Johnson, University of Kansas, 1948, and Judith Anne Johnson, Denison, 1958.

Lois Lee McAdow Miller and her son, John McAdow Miller, University of Iowa, 1924 and 1950; and Lois's grandchildren, William Chester Miller, Indiana University, 1976, and Bonnie Jean Miller-McLemore, Kalamazoo College, 1977.

All at Hamilton College: Richard W. Couper, 1947; his father, Edgar W. Couper, 1920; and both grandfathers, Walter T. Couper and George A. Watrous, 1892 and 1894. ■

Phi Beta Kappa Helps Provide Enrichment For Virginia High School Students, Teachers

In response to a request from the privately funded Prince William County, Va., Educational Foundation, Phi Beta Kappa helped arrange a colloquium on chaos theory to provide enrichment for the county's high school students and teachers last year. Some 330 top students from the county's seven high schools attended the Friday, November 17, 1995, session conducted by Suzanne Sumner, professor of mathematics and president of the Mary Washington College chapter.

The next day, 42 teachers and several administrators spent the day attending lectures by Sumner and two other members of the Mary Washington faculty—David Ambuel,

of the philosophy department, and Michael Smith, of the physics department—and by John Commito, a marine biologist at Gettysburg College.

According to Rita G. Koman, a Prince William County school teacher who coordinated the project, "the students did not want to leave after their two hours were over and the teachers wanted to know why they couldn't have more intellectual experiences like this one." The entire program was made possible by a donation of \$1,500 from Phi Beta Kappa and matching funds from the foundation, which paid for stipends for the professors and the coordinator.

Study Uses Data From Φ BK Members

Arline Bronzaft, professor emerita of psychology at Lehman College, City University of New York, and chair of the Phi Beta Kappa association, has recently published *Top of the Class: Guiding Children along the Smart Path to Happiness*.

Based on data she collected from a sample of Phi Beta Kappa members concerning their professional, social, and personal lives, the book is a volume in the Creativity Research Monograph Series of Ablex Publishing Co., 355 Chestnut Street, Norwood, NJ 07648.

Eloise Clark Elected to Phi Beta Kappa Senate

The Φ BK Senate has elected Eloise E. Clark, vice president of academic affairs and professor of biological sciences, Bowling Green State University (Φ BK, Mary Washington College, 1951), to complete the term (1994-2000) of Vera Kistiakowsky, professor emerita of physics, MIT, who has resigned. Clark has served on the Society's Committee on Qualifications since 1985.



Eloise Clark

Monterey Institute Offers Scholarships

The Monterey Institute of International Studies is again making available half-tuition, two-year scholarships to Phi Beta Kappa members who are admitted to a degree program at the institute in 1997-98. Eleven awards were made in 1995-96. To obtain an application form, write to the Admissions Office, 425 Van Buren Street, Monterey, CA 93940 or telephone (408) 647-4123.

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