Boorstin to Receive Award

35th Triennial Council Will Meet in San Antonio
October 27–30; Singletary and Ferrante Are Nominated for President, Vice President

San Antonio is the site for the 35th triennial Council of the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa, which will meet October 27–30. A highlight of the weekend will be the presentation of the Phi Beta Kappa Award for Distinguished Service to the Humanities to Daniel J. Boorstin, Librarian of Congress Emeritus, at the banquet October 29. This award, which includes a medal and $2,500, is given only once in a triennial period.

The host chapter is Epsilon of Texas at Trinity University. Headquarters for the meetings is the Hotel Hilton Palacio del Rio.

All Council participants have been invited to a reception and buffet supper on October 27 at the Institute of Texan Cultures, cohosted by the Phi Beta Kappa Associations of San Antonio and Greater Houston, the Trinity University chapter, and the United Chapters.

As the legislative body of the United Chapters, the Council will consider and vote on the Senate's recommendations for the establishment of three new chapters, at the University of Dallas, Millsaps College, and the University of Tulsa. The Council will also vote on an amendment to the constitution to change the name of the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa to reflect the fact that the constitution identifies both the chapters and the associations as the constituent members of the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa.

Among the other subjects to be discussed are the continuing efforts to achieve greater uniformity in standards of election to the society among the 237 chapters.

The Council will also elect officers and senators for the coming triennium. Nominated for president of the United Chapters is Otis A. Singletary, president emeritus of the University of Kentucky and currently vice president of the United Chapters. The nominee for vice president is Joan M. Ferrante, professor of English and comparative literature at Columbia University and currently a member of the Phi Beta Kappa Senate.

Nine senators at large and three district senators will be elected for six-year terms. The nominees for the Senate are as follows (asterisks denote senators nominated for reelection):

(continued on back cover)

Johns Hopkins Teaching Assistant Wins 1988–89 Sibley Fellowship

Anne Catherine Vila, who is completing work on her Ph.D. in French at the Johns Hopkins University, has been awarded Phi Beta Kappa's Sibley Fellowship for the academic year 1988–89. She will use the grant to study the influence of medicine and natural philosophy on the fiction of the French Enlightenment.

A 1983 graduate of Brown University, she has studied in Paris and Avignon. For some time she has been exploring interdisciplinary approaches to literature and science, and has written articles on John Locke's "naturalist" rhetoric in An Essay Concerning Human Understanding and on Balzac's fictional borrowings from the physiologist Xavier Bichat in Louis Lamber.

She is the 40th winner of the award, which was established with funds bequeathed to Phi Beta Kappa in the will of Isabelle Stone.

In 1989, the Sibley Fellowship, which carries a $7,000 stipend, will be offered for studies in Greek language, literature, history, or archaeology. Candidates must be unmarried women between 25 and 35 years of age who hold the doctorate or who have fulfilled all the requirements for the doctorate except the dissertation. They must be planning to devote full-time work to research during the fellowship year that begins September 1, 1989.

Further information and application forms may be obtained by writing to the Sibley Fellowship Committee, Phi Beta Kappa, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20009.

Two Phi Beta Kappa Members Vie for U.S. Presidency

For the first time since 1912, both the Republican and the Democratic presidential nominees are members of Phi Beta Kappa: George Bush, Yale, 1947, and Michael Dukakis, Swarthmore, 1955. In 1912, Republican William Howard Taft (Yale) and Progressive Theodore Roosevelt (Harvard) lost to Democrat Woodrow Wilson (honorary member, Wesleyan).

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Boorstin to Be Honored by Triennial Council For Lifetime Contributions to Humanities
By Priscilla S. Taylor

WHEN DANIEL J. BOORSTIN announced his intention to retire as Librarian of Congress last year, the Washington Post recalled the controversy almost a dozen years before when he had been nominated. Professional librarians complained that he was not one of them; minority employees questioned his commitment to affirmative action programs; and some of his academic colleagues, perhaps jealous of the widespread popularity of his books, expressed objections to “a number of his well-expressed opinions.” The Post recalled that it had supported Boorstin’s confirmation by citing the advice Felix Frankfurter had given Franklin D. Roosevelt decades before: “What is wanted in the directing head of a great library is imaginative energy and vision. He should be a man who knows books, loves books, and makes books.”

There’s no question that Boorstin filled that bill, and his stewardship of the Library now is widely acclaimed. Early on, he appointed an internal task force and eight outside advisory groups to help plan a reorganization of the Library, which took place two years later. He opened the bronze doors in the great hall, made the stacks more accessible to scholars, put out picnic tables, and sponsored an assortment of festivities celebrating the whole range of American civilization. He is credited with increasing the public visibility of the Library; establishing more systematic interaction with the world of scholarship and learning; and, perhaps most important, persuading Congress to support his vision. The Library has now occupied the James Madison Building—which at one time was threatened with a takeover by Congress for office space—and the Library’s two older buildings are being extensively renovated.

In the belief that enthusiasm for the latest technology should not replace books, Boorstin was also the inspiration for the Center for the Book project at the Library, established by act of Congress but supported by private resources, to encourage reading. The center has sponsored studies, symposia, and publications and, working with CBS, has sponsored a project to encourage television viewers to “Read More About It.” As tangible evidence of his continuing devotion to the Library and as a tribute to the institution they came to love, Boorstin and his wife Ruth donated $100,000 on his retirement to establish a Boorstin fund to support the Library’s publication of elegant facsimiles.

Boorstin, a trim septuagenarian who obviously has more mental and physical energy than most people a decade younger, expresses great respect for Phi Beta Kappa, which he calls a “symbol of quality.” He is enthusiastic about the prospect of receiving Phi Beta Kappa’s triennial award for lifetime contributions to the humanities, which is to be presented in San Antonio in October.

In response to a question about the role of the humanities today, he notes that all Americans should be exposed to the classics in their own language: “It’s a crime against society to produce illiterates by design.” He adds, “There is only one kind of history—human history—not men’s or women’s history, not black, not white. The approach to teaching history must be ecumenical to be humanistic. History is by nature comprehensive. Segregation has no place in history any more than anywhere else in a civilized society. To fragment history into races and sexes and classes is to condemn part of mankind to the back of the bus.”

Boorstin’s own approach to history, and to life, has always been comprehensive and whole-hearted. His irrepressible enthusiasm for learning and ideas is concretely evident in the two books that have span the length of one wall in his spacious, modern townhouse in Washington’s Cleveland Park and encompass the books he has written and their translations—from his Harvard undergraduate thesis to the much-applauded Discoverers. This latest book has won him several new groups of admirers, and the awards of the American Geographical Society and the Association of American Geographers, whose medal is displayed nearby. Among the 14 translations of this book, so far, his library includes those in German, Dutch, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Korean, and Japanese.

The works of art that surround him reflect his attachment to civilizations as disparate as the Orient (the Japanese government awarded him its highest “Order of the Sacred Treasure”); Europe (a wall-size 15th-century planisphere shows the Earth encircled by water, with Jerusalem at its center); and modern America (a large work of kinetic art by Frank Malina over his bookshelves quietly transmutes from pink to yellow and white.)

Although Boorstin has won prizes everywhere he has gone (including the Bowdoin at Harvard, the Jenkins and Younger at Balliol), he wears his honors modestly. His life has been dominated not only by reading and writing books but also by rising to new challenges along the way. Almost every job he was offered seemed to have something he had not, on paper, been “prepared for.” And some of his success as an American historian may stem from the fact that he has spent so much time observing his own country from abroad.

His Early Days

Boorstin is a product of the public schools of Tulsa, Oklahoma, in the days when high school was serious business (he remembers a solid grounding in academic subjects and a bicameral school legislature). He came to love Gibbon at Harvard (a small engraving of Gibbon adorns his study wall), but when a beloved grandfather died, he dropped his study of history and literature for biochemistry, to find a way to deal with disease. Although he later switched back, after finding he had “no aptitude” for science, he apparently had adequate aptitude to maintain an average that won him a summa and his Phi Beta Kappa key. Moreover, he says, his “indoctrination into science” stood him in good stead later.

When he won a Rhodes Scholarship to Balliol College at Oxford, he studied law and took a double first in the bachelor of arts and bachelor of civil law degrees. He attributes his interest in the law to his father, whom he describes as a “general practitioner” of the law in Tulsa—a man who spent his life helping and counseling others in the days before litigation became the answer to every problem.

Boorstin points out that he enjoyed the humanistic approach to the law at Oxford, which emphasized Roman law, legal history, and comparative law. He also relished using his Latin, but found the law
The Quotable Boorstin
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A new price of our American standard of living is our imprisonment in the present.
That imprisonment tempts us to a morbid preoccupation with ourselves, and so induces hypochondria. . . . We think we are the beginning and the end of the world. And as a result we get our nation and our lives, our strengths and our ailments, quite out of focus.

Overwhelmed by the instant moment—headlined in this morning's newspaper and flashed on this hour's newscast—we don't see the whole real world around us. We don't see the actual condition of our long-lived national body.

In a word, we have lost our sense of history. In our schools the story of our nation has been displaced by "social studies"—which is often the story only of what ails us. In our churches the effort to see man sub specie aeternitatis has been displaced by a "social gospel"—which is a polemic against the supposed special evils of our time. Our book publishers and literary reviewers no longer seek the timeless and the durable, but spend much of their efforts in fruitless search for a la mode "social commentary"—which they pray won't be out of date when the issue goes to press in two weeks or when the manuscript becomes a book in six months.

Without the materials of historical comparison, having lost our traditional respect for the wisdom of ancestors and the culture of kindred nations, we are left with little but abstractions, baseless utopia, to compare ourselves with. No wonder, then, that some of our distraught citizens libel us as the worst nation in the world, or the bane of human history. For we have wandered out of history.

We flagellate ourselves as "poverty-ridden"—by comparison with some mythic paradise. We talk about the war in Vietnam as if it were the first war in American history to which many Americans were opposed. We condemn our nation for not yet having attained perfect justice, and we forget that ours is the most motley and miscellaneous great nation in history—the first to use the full force of law and constitutions and to enlist the vast majority of its citizens in a strenuous quest for justice for all races and ages and religions.

We flagellate ourselves as "the land of the free and home of the brave."—by comparison with some mythical Trouble-Free World, where all mankind was at peace. We talk about the war in Vietnam as if it were the first war in American history to which many Americans were opposed. We condemn our nation for not yet having attained perfect justice, and we forget that ours is the most motley and miscellaneous great nation in history—the first to use the full force of law and constitutions and to enlist the vast majority of its citizens in a strenuous quest for justice for all races and ages and religions.

We flagellate ourselves as "poverty-ridden"—by comparison with some mythical time when there was no bottom 20 percent in the economic scale. We sputter over our smoggy air not with the odor of horse dung and the plague of flies and the smells of garbage and human excrement which filled cities in the past, but with the honeysuckle perfumes of some nonexistent City Beautiful. We forget that even if the water in many cities today is not as spring-pure nor as palatable as we would like, still for most of history the water of the cities (and of the countryside) was undrinkable.
Boorstin to Be Honored
(continued from page 3)

achievements of mankind." And despite his endorsement of the latest technology for the Library, he still pounds out his books on a manual Olympia typewriter, surrounded by his own books and some on loan from the Library.

Boorstin is also an active member of the editorial advisory board for U.S. News and World Report, and his responsibilities for Doubleday as "editor at large," a title created for him, take him to New York each month. He is particularly enthusiastic about reissuing some of the books on Doubleday's backlist, which includes volumes by Teddy Roosevelt and other U.S. presidents.

He is "exhilarated" to see his own books appearing in translation, which he refers to as both a largely "unrecognized, uncompensated art" and an affirmation of the humanities, because the ideas are "no longer imprisoned in one language." He is also particularly proud of the first two publications paid for by the Boorstin donation to the Center for the Book: reproductions of a Japanese fairy tale and a set of antique maps.

Not surprisingly, Boorstin's model as Librarian of Congress was Archibald McLeish, with whom he consulted before McLeish, with whom he consulted before taking the job and who, Boorstin notes, was still writing in his 90s. It's safe to assume that Daniel Boorstin intends to be, too.

The Quotable Boorstin (continued)


A pseudo-event, then, is a happening that possesses the following characteristics:

1. It is not spontaneous, but comes about because someone has planned, plotted, or incited it. Typically, it is not a train wreck or an earthquake, but an interview.

2. It is planted primarily (not always exclusively) for the immediate purpose of being reported or reproduced. Therefore, its occurrence is arranged for the convenience of the reporting or reproducing media. Its success is measured by how widely it is reported. . . .

3. Its relation to the underlying reality of the situation is ambiguous. . . .

4. While the news interest in a train wreck is in what happened and in the real consequences, the interest in an interview is always, in a sense, in whether it really happened and in what might have been the motives.

5. Usually it is intended to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. The hotel's thirtieth-anniversary celebration, by saying that the hotel is a distinguished institution, actually makes it one. . . .

* * *

Our age has produced a new kind of eminence. . . . This new kind of eminence is "celebrity." The word "celebrity," . . . originally meant not a person but a condition—as the Oxford English Dictionary says, "the condition of being much talked about; famousness, notoriety." . . . New American dictionaries define a celebrity as "a famous or well-publicized person." . . . The celebrity is a person who is known for his well-knownness.

His qualities—or rather his lack of qualities—illustrate our peculiar problems. He is neither good nor bad, great nor petty. He is the human pseudo-event.

Recommended Reading


When completed a century ago, the 36-inch refractor atop Mount Hamilton was a superlative achievement, the subject of admiration the world over. Success took the conjunction of private fortune, vision, innovation, and ability that characterized the American venture of those days. Richard Floyd and Thomas Fraser deserve recognition as the dedicated heroes of the enterprise. Eccentric, shrewd, many-sided James Lick played a large role in San Francisco's development and left many monuments. None is of greater significance than the observatory he commissioned for the budding University of California. It has accumulated a glorious record of discovery and influence. Grown elderly, Lick, concerned about the disposition of his body, declared himself thus against cremation, "No, sir! I intend to rot like a gentleman!" and willed that his body be interred in the pier of the great telescope. The knowledge that it lies there caused this reviewer, when, as a susceptible boy of 10, he was first taken up to view Saturn, to turn his head away from the pier with its awesome contents.

Ronald Geballe


Time and space are the concepts on which all science is based; we can measure them, but defining them in more primitive terms is beyond us. All life responds unknowingly to them, but humans, out of our special needs, must have conceived them. Szamosi applies to the demands of early music and pictorial art for first giving structure to the concepts. Their growing elaboration brought quantification and measurement. Galileo, Newton, and their contemporaries could not free science from pure speculations until the needs of early music and pictorial art could be seen as passive arenas in which actions take place. Today we don't see them quite that way but we aren't through wrestling with the concepts.

This eloquent, provocative essay, totally nonmathematical, brings the reader up to the many-dimensional universe of contemporary theory and the possibility that "there exists nothing in the world but structured space-time."

The Ice: A Journey to Antarctica. Stephen J. Pyne. Univ. of Iowa, 1986. $37.50.

"The Ice is profoundly passive; it does not give, it takes. The Ice is a study in reductionism. " Superficially, like all other places on Earth, Antarctica has its geology, geography, weather, tales of exploration, literature, art, and geopolitics. But it also has unrelenting ice and other special qualities and quantities that are extremes. Pyne, a historian by profession, has been there, and his graceful writing evokes an understanding of all these to an extent unlikely to be achieved without daring to venture there.


Holton, a Jefferson lecturer, is a leading analyst of the presuppositions and styles of science in our day, especially those of Einstein. The high school textbook and course developed through his insight, leadership, and perseverance stand as a model for the integration of the history of physics with the subject matter itself, as well as for clear exposition. This collection of essays contains contributions on Einstein, the 20th-century history of science, and on the role of science in education and in the public interest. All are interesting, carefully worked out, and informative.


The author, a mathematician, takes the reader on an enjoyable excursion to the infinite, exploring the concept along its various dimensions: mathematical, geometrical, aesthetic, and cosmological. The many illustrations (which include apt quotations running from the Bible and Greek antiquity to the present day) will connect his work with almost any reader.

THE KEY REPORTER
Baisputes the "conventional" view that Saudi Arabia's foreign policy is governed by Wahhabi exploration. Ingenious Szilard had, years before Rabi: Scientist and Citizen. John Rigden.

lectured his family and friends in Yiddish on that religion and science "spring from the feeling." He is acknowledged as one of those he also had the capacity to develop the theory of his students. Twenty Nobel laureates are among the branches of the "Rabi Tree," which best illustrates the pervasive influence of this man. After distinguished service during World War II, he was recognized the world over as a statesman of science who would give considered, humane opinions succinctly and forthrightly. His last years were devoted to setting forth his vision that science, respected by people who differ extremely in other matters, can help to bring harmony to the world.

The Making of the Atomic Bomb. Richard Rhodes. Simon & Schuster, 1986. $22.95. Here is a readable account, solid in its treatment of the technical principles, and full and fair in its treatment of the many people who participated in the development, use, and attempts to control this creation. From the beginning of the century, when the existence of atoms of matter and quanta of radiation became undeniable, the course of physics was set; the discovery of fission was inevitable. Once it was discovered, the intrinsically interesting properties of the reaction demanded full exploration. Ingenious Szilard had, years before, anticipated the likelihood of a self-sustaining nuclear reaction. The stage was set and the war provided the powerful motivation. This is the best treatment so far, and it is an admirable one.

Madeline R. Robinton

Condemned to Repetition: The United States and Nicaragua. Robert A. Pastor. Princeton, 1987. $24.95. Commonly, the mistakes are those who do not know history, said Santayana. This analysis of the historical background of the revolution in Nicaragua and of the process of the formulation of U.S. policy by Pastor, professor of history at Emory and director of the Latin American and Caribbean Program at the Carter Center, is intended to prevent this. He served on the National Security Council as director of Latin American and Caribbean Affairs from 1977 to 1979 with access to classified papers in that period and conducted extensive interviews with many (100 plus) participants, both American and Nicaraguan. To avoid the "repetition of the Cuban parallel," Pastor offers thoughtful and well-reasoned suggestions for future U.S. policy in this area.


Professor Goldberg of Tel Aviv University disputes the "conventional" view that Saudi Arabia's foreign policy is governed by Wahhabi doctrine, a militant fundamentalist Islamic reform movement of the 18th century, both proselytizing and expansionist. Rather, he contends that Ibn Saud, who became the ruler in 1902 after his exile in Kuwait, learned there the technique of a pragmatic diplomacy. He traces this development from 1902 to 1918, when Ibn Saud skillfully played the British off against the Turks. The British dominated the same period of Saudi Arabia and India, and their commercial interests in Persia. Ibn Saud learned to use "the Russian card" to secure the support of the British in his negotiations with the Ottoman Empire, whose sovereignty he acknowledged. World War I led to the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of Saudi Arabia. A final chapter shows how Saudi Arabia adapted its foreign policy to the changes in the power structure in the Middle East.

Revolutionary Iran: Challenge and Response in the Middle East. R.K. Ramazani. Johns Hopkins, 1987. $27.50. This is not a history of the revolution in Iran, but a guide to the complexities of the politics of the Middle East. Professor Ramazani deals with the geopolitics, the socioeconomic changes, and the impact of Khomeini and Shia ideology on the states of the Persian Gulf and the Eastern Mediterranean and offers his guidelines for U.S. policy in that area.

The Middle East Reader. Ed. by Michael Curtis. Transaction Books, 1986. $14.95. This is a collection of articles, mainly by American academics, for the Middle East Review. Professor Curtis of Rutgers provides a most informative introduction, which helps put into context the detailed studies on the political, economic, and religious factors affecting the Arab states, Israel, and the role of the Superpowers.

The Crusades: A Short History. Jonathan Riley-Smith. Yale, 1987. $25. This is truly a short history of a most complicated period in the area now known as the Middle East. Chronologically it covers the time from 1095, when Pope Urban II preached the first crusade, the "holy war" for the recovery of Jerusalem and against the Molesmes in the East and in Spain, to 1798, when the "crusading movement ended with the fall of Malta on 15 June." Professor Riley-Smith of the University of London raises questions of interpretation and refers frequently to conflicting theories. Political, economic, religious, and intellectual development are lucidly integrated and continuously related to significant events outside Europe's borders.

Robert P. Sonnokovsky


Scripture is historically and fundamentally oral, but both scholarship in general and some popular practice in America have neglected this sensual aspect of religion in favor of the purely mental aspects, thereby missing an understanding of an approach to scripture immeasurably important not merely to preliteracy cultures but to the major continuing scriptural traditions today. Graham studies in some detail the Vedas, Christian, and Muslim traditions with reference to others. He does not deprecate print textuality—not the vulnerability of holy books themselves in procession, nor their calligraphic presences as objects of adoration, nor the pleasures of scholarship on the silent text—but he stresses orality as the enlivening factor in religious sensibilities.


The title refers to the background noise in the dialogue's oral dramatic setting. Ferrari (continued on page 6)
Recommended Reading (continued from page 5)

shows how Phaedrus accommodates himself with routine, "professional" appropriateness to the discussion, whereas Socrates is stimulated by the setting to guide their conversation with the lively responses of a philosopher. Ferrari's intriguing analysis continues through the major, complexly related issues of the dialogue — rhetoric, love, the spoken versus the written word — and to others, illuminatingly upon others, such as mythology and philosophic study. All Greek is translated.


The army is widely recognized as our best scholar of ancient Greek religion, a vast and enigmatic field. Neither of these volumes is a pat survey. In each, Burkert deals with the evidence directly, clearing away misconceptions and discussing problems of interpretation. The first book, which has four chapters, is as many Harvard lectures, and 12 plates exemplifying visual evidence, attempts to reconstruct the personal aspects of the cults. The last chapter, "on the extraordinary experience" of participating in them, as well as the first chapter, "on the religious need," might be read before the second and third, on organizational, literary, and theoretical matters.

The other book is a more carefully arranged and voluminous study that first appeared in German in 1977, here not only translated but updated by Burkert. It surveys the prehistoric and Minoan-Mycenaean background and concentrates on Late Geometric, Archaic, and Classical Greek religion in complex analysis of ritual and myth, concluding with a chapter on the approaches of the philosophers, especially Plato. Both books are extremely valuable to students of religion.


The Peace of Nicias and the Sicilian Expedition. 1981. $38.50.

The Fall of the Athenian Empire. 1987. $35.00. (vol. set, $135.)

These four volumes by the distinguished ancient historian from Yale are the first large-scale attempt to write a history of the Peloponnesian War since the turn of the century. Kagan's account is responsible to the advances of scholarship since then, and although absorbingly and penetratingly written, it deliberately avoids social science terminology and clearly delineates evidence and interpretation. Kagan's special excellence is the contrary-to-fact conditional sentence, which many Harvard lectures, and 12 plates exemplifying visual evidence, attempts to reconstruct the personal aspects of the cults. The last chapter, "on the extraordinary experience" of participating in them, as well as the first chapter, "on the religious need," might be read before the second and third, on organizational, literary, and theoretical matters.

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The puzzle is a hardy perennial—we still have not explained how the proto-Indo europeans brought farming to Europe about 6000 B.C. It has been more fashionable and comfortable to search into the rise and status of cultures than to explain their "collapse," and "collapse" may be too facile a word anyway. At all events, the tales of Mesopotamia, Maya, Teotihuacan, the Han Dynasty, even Rome, read differently today from what they had done. Yet—laws of Untergang? Not that either N. T. Wright or the other scholars and social scientists attempted a consensus. Still, the spirit of our age is congenial climate for "collapse" as an anxious theme; let the symposiumsHughes-o- gather. Their thought here penetrates; their speech is not arcane.


The whole is largely confined to the New England area (17th to 19th century) and a generalized America; still, a racy historian can make the first informative of the second. Not surprisingly, the national issues frequently invite a second look. As public agencies have taken from the family responsibilities for child-rearing, the residuals have increased some difficulties. Today the role of the father has taken on a peculiar importance; the author devotes welcome bulk of space to this oft-neglected topic. Of course, the status and role of women have drastically changed, but the historic woman was not the downtrodden figure often supposed. The "teen-ager" is something of a latter-day phenomenon. Midlife crises then and now, old age then and now—a brilliant social historian looks at the intimate side of the American life-course.


The puzzle is a hardy perennial—we still are nescient as to how or whether a problematical Indo-European people ever embodied an Indo-European speech. The author, an archaeo- logical authority and a disarming and linguistically knowledgeable writer, urges that today we turn to the topics of the puzzle as we have never yet done. He is an astute critic of tenured hypotheses; he proposes that the proto-Indo Europeans were neolithic farming people in eastern Anatolia who encroached westward to Greece, northeastward to inner Asia. The westerners spread their farming to the Iberian peninsula, and northwest via the Balkans into Central Euro- pe; the easterners spread into Iran and India. Speakers of the Tocharian languages were nomads. The stem-subfamilies of Indo-European speech diversified pari passu. The Indo-
social economy amidst a changing outside world; it was harder still, and more important to them, to peg their ideals and world views. The author, dispassionate and compassionate, looks at the Brothers and Sisters as they struggle against the ultimately impossible. Yet perhaps the lesson of the Christian dedication and cooperation still awaits the learning.


In the announcement of the presenta-

Correction

Russell B. Stevens

Invisible Frontiers: The Race to Synthe-


Bones of Contention: Controversies in the


Race, controversies, debate—three words, each plucked from one of the subtitles above, underscore the existence to which even the very best science is done by persons whose dedication and intellectual brilliance are affected by attributes common to the human race in general. They hotly argue differing views, they exult in being the first to make a new discovery, they agonize when new data damage a treasured hypothesis, they savor the recognition of peers. And, to their credit, for the most part their interactions are restrained and cordial.

Hall tells, in eminently readable style, about the almost frantic effort, at the forefront of molecular biology, to synthesize the human gene for insulin. At the other end, in a sense, of the biological spectrum, Lewin chronicles recent efforts to push ever further in the search for fossil evidence of humans and their immediate ancestral relatives. Bowler details how views have changed over the years, as new evidence—and new investigators—have come onto the scene.

These accounts drive home once again the crucial importance of new, often highly sophisticated, investigative techniques in making possible the advancement of knowledge and the resolution of issues. Not only is research in the natural sciences increasingly and perforce a team effort, but often the members of an effective team must bring with them highly disparate backgrounds and skills.

Lawrence Willson


The 10th volume of Studies merits a place of respect in the library of the student of American literature a century ago by an essay on Mary Moody Emerson, Ralph Waldo’s formidable aunt, as a “Calvinist Link to Transcen-
dentalism”; the third (and final) installment of the selected letters of Elizabeth Hoar, “Aunt Lizzie” to his children; and “Censorship, American Style: The Case of Lydia Maria Child,” author of the scandalous novel Hobomok (one of the few novels Henry Thoreau ever read) and the even more scandalous Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans Called African-Americans in which she described the slave laws and practices of the United States as “more harsh than those of any other nation,” denounced the laws against miscegenation, and called for immediate emancipation (in 1833).


For “amateurs of language who love the stuff” and for the professionals, too, whether conservatives who lament the steady deterioration of the language or the permissively liberal who accept the change as painful, because to oppose it is to invite apoplexy, the books listed here will bring hours of mingled horror and delight.

Ciardi, on the prowl for the origins of words and phrases, alert to shifting usage and popular etymology, calls on the reader to join him in his wanderings through the volubility, dog-tired, booze, coon (Negro), digs (lodgings—surprisingly, an American coin-
age); the history of ain’t; and the origins of “Alphonse and Gaston” and “Killroy was here.” His book is just what the jacket says it is: a browser’s dictionary.

Barzun’s book is made up of short pieces, the product of 40 years of scornful commentary on pedantry and pretentiousness in the use of language—the invention of such barbarisms as language arts, learning experience, meaningful relationship, and parenting. Barzun is not above quibbling, but as he says, “All precision is quibbling.” He will not countenance the use of cohort to refer to fewer than 300 people; he would never use contact as a verb, and he is a last-ditch defender of the clarifying hyphen.

As Barzun is the sophisticated conservative, Wilson is the sophisticated—really laid-back—champion of nonjudgmental lexicography. What is, is (sometimes alas!). In his engrossing study of the liberation of college dictionaries from the taboos of a blasted gentility, he makes illuminating observations about “the gender issue,” the ubiquitous hopefully, and kindred aspects of usage, but his principal accomplishment lies in his chapters on the “bad” words derived from sex, excrement, racial bias, and ethnicity. If you have not lately looked up words in the first two categories in a dictionary of contemporary vintage (and the chances are that you haven’t if your own vintage is pre-1965), perhaps, in the interest of learning, you should do so, but be prepared to be, if not shocked, at least astonished. The old taboos have almost completely disappeared, but beware of the racial or ethnic slur. It could get you into real trouble.


Although when Poe died it was recorded that “his lack of stability, of fixed principles of character, frustrated all his plans and exchanged them in a dishonored grave,” his story has given the lie to the somber conclusion of that judgment. He may well be the most constantly read of our classic writers, and his life continues to fascinate, perhaps because it has been invaded by mystery and mendacity. The Poe Log, in 919 pages, presents the facts of that life, collected from “all known documents and events relating to Poe” and arranged in a (continued on back cover)
Phi Beta Kappa's Treasurer, Mark C. Feer, Dies

Mark C. Feer, treasurer of the Phi Beta Kappa Foundation and of the United Chapters, died on April 28 in New York City. He was elected to Phi Beta Kappa at Dartmouth College in 1949 and earned a Ph.D. from Tufts University. In the 1970s he was a general partner at Kuhn Loeb & Company and subsequently a managing director at Lehman Brothers. Since 1980 he had taught international economics at Tufts and at the Graduate School of International Affairs at Columbia University.

He was deeply devoted to Phi Beta Kappa and gave generously of his time and experience to directing the society's investment policy. He presided over a period of unprecedented growth in Phi Beta Kappa's endowment, which tripled in value during his tenure, and thereby established a sound financial foundation for the society's programs.

Recommended Reading

(continued from page 7)

"year-by-year, month-by-month, day-to-day" format.


Willa Cather's Short Fiction. Marilyn Arnold. Swallow (Ohio Univ.), 1986. $10.95.

The establishment of Willa Cather as one of America's classic writers is attested to by the publication in a single volume of the Library of America of her first collection of short stories (including such memorable tales as "The Sculptor's Funeral," "The Wagner Matinee," and "Paul's Case") in 1905 and four of her novels, all from the texts as originally printed, and by the collection of published interviews with her, dating from her arrival in Pittsburgh as editor of the Home Monthly in 1897, to 1940; her speeches, beginning with the oration she delivered at her graduation from Red Cloud High School in 1890; and a smattering of her letters that for one reason or another escaped her testamentary interdiction against the printing of her correspondence. Because Cather's telling of her own story is distinguished by falsifications and reticences that, however understandable, distort the truth, Sharon O'Brien's account of Cather's early years (up to the writing of O Pioneers! in 1913) is all the more valuable, even though one pauses nervously over its description as "a close study of gender and creativity." In trying to cover the tracks to her past, Cather naturally invited the biographer (whose intrusion she feared and deplored) to write such chapters as "Divine Pomintious and Unnatural Love." Arnold's discussion of Cather's short fiction is straightforward and unpretentious.

Triennial Council Meeting

(continued from page 1)

Modern European History, University of California at Los Angeles.

One senator is to be elected from each of the following districts:

New England: *Ruth M. Adams, professor of English, Dartmouth College; and Z. Philip Ambrose, professor of classics, University of Vermont.


South Central: Thomas A. Bartlett, chancellor, University of Alabama; and *David W. Hart, professor of English and associate dean of the Graduate School, University of Arkansas.

Although the voting members of the Council are the chapter and association delegates, any member of Phi Beta Kappa is welcome to attend the Council meeting. Members wishing to attend as nondelegates may receive information from the United Chapters, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20009.

Essay Prize Established by University of Oregon Chapter

The Alpha of Oregon chapter of Phi Beta Kappa is establishing the Stanley B. Greenfield Phi Beta Kappa Prize with an annual award of $100 for the winner of an undergraduate essay contest. Greenfield, who died last year after nearly 30 years on the faculty, was considered one of the university's most dedicated and distinguished professors. The prize will be funded by a permanent endowment; an anonymous donor has agreed to match the first $1,000 contributed. Contributions should be addressed to the Greenfield Phi Beta Kappa Essay Prize, University of Oregon Foundation, P.O. Box 3346, Eugene, OR 97403.