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Book Review of '...Ask What You Can Do for Your Country: The Memory and Legacy of John F. Kennedy' by Dan B. Fleming

Michael A. Genovese

Loyola Marymount University, mgenovese@lmu.edu

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BOOK REVIEWS

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Biography

Belli, Gioconda. *The Country Under My Skin: A Memoir of Love and War.*

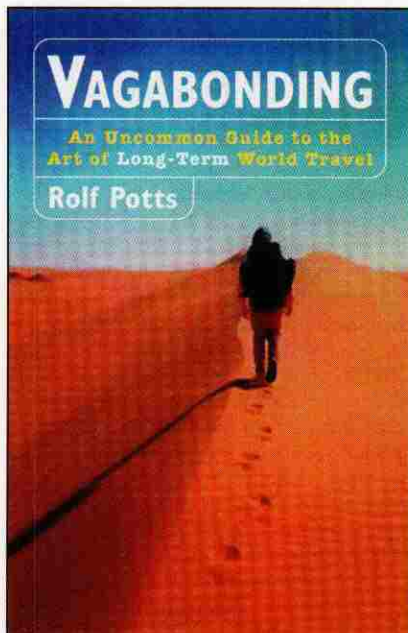
Knopf. Nov. 2002. c.304p. tr. from Spanish by Kristina Cordero. photogs. ISBN 0-375-40370-1. \$25. AUTOBIOG

Belli was born and raised in an upper-class Nicaraguan home but because of strong ideological leanings joined the rebel Sandinista forces in the overthrow of the country's Somoza regime. An important young Latin American writer, she has published numerous works of fiction and poetry, the best known translated into English being *The Inhabited Woman*. She was prominent in the Sandinista government but eventually married an American journalist and moved to the United States. This excellent autobiography, a translation from Spanish, is a fascinating literary and political memoir focusing on her activities with the rebel forces and the Sandinistas' first years in office. Enjoyable reading for its descriptions of a woman coming to grips with her feminism, political activities, and move to the United States, it will also be of value to scholars looking at Nicaragua or to collections in Latin America or literature in general.—*Mark L. Grover, Brigham Young Univ. Lib., Provo, UT*

Blaine, David. *Mysterious Stranger.*

Villard. Nov. 2002. ISBN 0-375-50573-3. \$24.95. AUTOBIOG

Over the years, the history of magic has been covered in numerous books about magic, its practitioners, and the art of the illusion, but Blaine's publication offers something different. Part autobiography, part history of magic, and part game book, this is an enticing and thoroughly enjoyable read. Blaine tells his life story through his relationship with magic, showing how his talent opened up doors to people and experiences that he would never have had otherwise. Interspersed with his story are those of famous illusionists, including Houdini, some of whose stunts he explains. While Blaine has always gotten by on his ability to mystify audiences, he is honest here about some of his more basic tricks, providing the "secrets" behind each one. In later chapters, he highlights the "endurance" feats he has completed (and presented on TV), most notably, "Frozen in Time." The book is filled with color pictures, which illuminate the text and help make it a captivating read for admirers and aspiring magicians of all ages. Recommended for public libraries. [Previewed in Prepub Alert, *LJ* 7/02.]—*Rachel Collins, "Library Journal"*



A book for serious travelers that is bound to become a classic, p. 120

Bumpers, Dale. *The Best Lawyer in a One-Lawyer Town: A Memoir.*

Random. Feb. 2003. c.304p. permanent paper. photogs. ISBN 0-375-50521-0. \$24.95. AUTOBIOG

Bumpers spent 24 years (1974-98) as a senator from Arkansas and the previous four years as governor. This entertaining memoir mostly describes his growing up in Charleston, AR (population 851), which distinguished itself as the first Southern town to integrate its school district following the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling. Stories, some funny and corny and some wrenching, such as his parents being killed by a drunk driver, hold the reader's attention. If Bill Clinton, Bumpers's successor as governor, is known as the "comeback kid," Bumpers should be remembered as the "giant killer" for defeating such prominent incumbent politicians as Winthrop Rockefeller, Orval Faubus, and William Fulbright. He returned to the Senate chambers in 1999 to present an impassioned and well-received speech arguing against President Clinton's impeachment. Readers who were fond of Jimmy Carter's *An Hour Before Daylight* will enjoy this autobiography of a likable country lawyer turned distinguished senator. Recommended for all public libraries. [Previewed in Prepub Alert, *LJ* 10/1/02.]—*Karl Helicher, Upper Merion Twp. Lib., King of Prussia, PA*

Cadbury, Deborah. *The Lost King of France: A True Story of Revolution, Revenge, and DNA.*

St. Martin's. 2002. c.320p. photogs. bibliog. ISBN 0-312-28312-1. \$24.95. BIOG
Award-winning journalist Cadbury (*Terrible Lizard; The Estrogen Effect*) ably combines history and modern science in this account of the brief life and death of Louis-Charles Capet—Louis XVII, "the Lost King of France." Solidly basing her story on historical sources (with seven pages of bibliography), Cadbury retells the events leading up to the French Revolution and the execution of the king and queen. Her re-creation of the last two years of the young dauphin's life in Temple Prison is an excellent example of narrative history, culminating with an account of the autopsy of this "orphan of the Temple" and the theft, by one of the doctors, of the child's heart. Cadbury's painstaking enquiry into the subsequent mystery—and eventual solution, through DNA testing in 2000—of the true fate of the lost dauphin is a fascinating example of how science can collaborate with historical research. In her last chapter, "Resolution," Cadbury presents Professor Philippe Delorme's summation: "The DNA analysis shows the child's heart is from a member of the Hapsburg family.... Since, apart from Marie-Thérèse who survived, the only other relative of Marie-Antoinette in the Temple in 1795 was Louis-Charles, now we have an answer. It was Louis XVII...who died in the Temple prison. It's definitive." This impressive conclusion to the Lost King's story is recommended for all public and academic libraries.—*Robert C. Jones, Warrensburg, MO*

Fleming, Dan B. *...Ask What You Can Do for Your Country: The Memory and Legacy of John F. Kennedy.*

Vandamere. Dec. 2002. c.256p. permanent paper. photogs. index. ISBN 0-918339-61-8. \$24.95. BIOG
John F. Kennedy has become an American icon. But why is he still so revered? Experts do not rate him that highly, but the public continually places him among the top two or three U.S. presidents of all time. Fleming (social studies education, emeritus, Virginia Tech Univ.) has gathered the recollections of those who were deeply affected by the life and death of this Camelot President. These stories, from home and abroad, from the grand (Barry Goldwater) to the common (a White House usher), from those close to the President (Evelyn Lincoln, Kennedy's personal secretary) to those who knew him only through television (as a high school student in West Virginia) bring back the mood and impact of the Kennedy era.

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Especially moving are the tributes and remembrances from former Peace Corps volunteers who answered the call from the young President to serve others. At times inspiring and at times sad, this uncritical look back at the legacy of John Kennedy does a fine job of bringing to life his meaning for a generation of Americans. Suitable for all large public and all academic libraries.—*Michael A. Genovese, Loyola Marymount Univ., Los Angeles*

Hughes, Lindsey. **Peter the Great: A Biography.**

Yale Univ. 2002. c.275p. bibliog. index. LC 2001007276. ISBN 0-300-09426-4. \$29.95. BIOG

In this "lite" version of her 1998 tome, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*, Hughes (Russian history and East European studies, University Coll., London) aims to make Peter's story more accessible to nonacademics. As she says in the preface, "I have found no reason to change my treatment of key issues and also some passages from the earlier book, but I hope [the reader] will discover new emphasis and new material." Modern Russia owes much to the tsar who "westernized" the country and opened it to the rest of the world. The author hopes to strike a balance between the public man and the real, or "private," Peter. She does an admirable job, but to shorten the work she has eliminated intriguing background material and long transitions between salient points. The result is a series of rather choppy, fact-filled chapters and subsections. The book is interesting, but as it lacks the context provided by the full version, the reader would need to be a Russian history buff or to have an academic background in the subject to enjoy the fast-moving monolog. Cautiously recommended for public libraries and for academic libraries without the longer work.—*Harry Willems, Southeast Kansas Lib. Syst., Iola*

Ortiz, Dianna with Patricia Davis. **The Blindfold's Eyes: My Journey from Torture to Truth.**

Orbis. 2002. c.480p. photogs. ISBN 1-57075-435-7. \$25. BIOG

In 1989, the author, a young Catholic missionary teaching in San Miguel Acatán, a Mayan village in Guatemala, was arrested by the police and kept in custody because of alleged subversive activities against the Guatemalan government. After a period of torture and abuse, she was helped to escape. This book, written with the help of Davis of the Guatemala Human Rights Commission, includes a detailed description of her kidnapping, interrogation, and horrific treatment by her captors. Most of the book, however, is a discussion of her activities after the escape, including the many investigations and her numerous attempts to bring world attention to the abuses that had been occurring in Guatemala. Understandably,

Ortiz's thoroughgoing account of her torture and subsequent search for justice makes for painful reading, but the book will certainly be of interest to Latin American and human rights library collections.—*Mark L. Grover, Brigham Young Univ. Lib., Provo, UT*

Remini, Robert V. **Joseph Smith: A Penguin Life.**

Viking. 2002. c.208p. bibliog. ISBN 0-670-03083-X. \$19.95. BIOG
Founder of the Mormon Church, Joseph Smith remains one of the most influential and enigmatic American religious leaders. Most Smith biographies are written by Mormons and generally positive, Heidi Swinton's *American Prophet* being an excellent recent example. However, Fawn Brodie's contrary view, *No Man Knows My History*, resulted in her being ex-communicated from the church. Remini, a highly respected scholar of the period who is not a Mormon, provides the latest in the "Penguin Life" series. More than any other biographer, he places Smith in the context of his time in terms of the broader social, political, and economic events that influenced him and his church. Remini strikes a middle ground between Smith the voice of God and Smith the charlatan that will alternately please and annoy the church's faithful as well as its detractors. He relies on Smith's own accounts of the discovery and translation of the Book of Mormon as well as those of the 11 witnesses who attested to seeing the golden tablets, without embracing or denigrating these accounts. At the same time, as a historian he acknowledges the fragility of such sources. With a useful bibliographic essay, this highly engaging biography is recommended for public libraries.—*Daniel Liestman, Florida Gulf Coast Univ. Lib., Ft. Myers*

Tuccille, Jerome. **Alan Shrugged: The Life and Times of Alan Greenspan, the World's Most Powerful Banker.**

Wiley. 2002. c.320p. permanent paper. photogs. index. ISBN 0-471-39906-X. \$27.95. BIOG

As the book's title suggests, Alan Greenspan, chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve, is probably the world's most powerful financial figure. Tuccille, a financial writer and biographer (*Rupert Murdoch; Trump*), covers Greenspan's life from his 1926 birth through early 2002. He recounts Greenspan's close relationship with his mother after his parents' divorce, his two marriages, and his affinity for both mathematics and music. Although he played jazz professionally, Greenspan chose to follow his mathematical side and made a career in economics. After years in the private sector, he moved into government service as an advisor to presidents Nixon and Ford before President Reagan appointed him Federal Reserve Chairman

in 1987, a job he has held ever since. Perhaps the most interesting details presented here are Greenspan's early involvement with Ayn Rand, his libertarian views on a limited government, and the flexibility he has maintained in his economic thought, which has allowed him to adjust to both differing market conditions and politicians. Tuccille's biography would be a useful addition to most academic and public libraries. For a more detailed look at Greenspan's years at the Fed, up to 2000, readers should consider Bob Woodward's *Maestro: Greenspan's Fed and the American Boom*.—*Lawrence R. Macted, Gannon Univ. Lib., Erie, PA*

Waller, Signe. **Love and Revolution: A Political Memoir; People's History of Greensboro Massacre, Its Setting and Aftermath.**

Rowman & Littlefield. (New Critical Theory). Dec. 2002. c.542p. permanent paper. bibliog. index. ISBN 0-7425-1365-3. **pap.** \$29.95. BIOG
On November 3, 1979, Waller and her husband, Jim, participated in a peaceful anti-Klan rally in Greensboro, NC, that ended in a hail of bullets as Klansmen opened fire on the crowd of mostly unarmed protesters. Five people were killed, including Jim Waller. Their police protection was nonexistent, and evidence pointed to collusion between law enforcement and the Klansmen and Nazis involved. In this memoir-cum-history, freelance writer Waller, who with her husband was a union organizer and an open and ardent Communist, tells the history of the Worker's Viewpoint Organization, their labor union activities, the massacre itself, and the gross miscarriage of justice that occurred in its aftermath. Despite overwhelming evidence, the five gunmen were acquitted and were brought to justice only after six years and a frustrating civil rights lawsuit. Waller goes a long way toward making her case that the government simply didn't care if a bunch of Klansmen killed a bunch of Communists. This book belongs in academic collections on the history of radical movements in the United States.—*Deirdre Bray Root, Middletown P.L., OH*

Communications

The Best American Magazine Writing 2002.

HarperPerennial:HarperCollins. 2002. c.512p. ed. by American Society of Magazine Editors. ISBN 0-06-051572-4. **pap.** \$14.95. COMM

Derived from the winners and finalists of the annual National Magazine Awards, this collection, in its third year, includes 19 features culled from about 1500 entries. Each is introduced in two or three sentences, then presented without author comment or afterword. Brief author biographies are collected at the front of the book. The only sub-