



Brewster Ladies' Library

BLL Book Reviews – June 2011

Brewster Ladies Library
1822 Main Street
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Lake Views

by Steven Weinberg

reviewed by Don Boink

The title, *Lake Views*, caught my attention because I love lakes and water. The author, Steven Weinberg turned out to be a Nobel Prize winner in “small particle physics”. He is a professor of science at the University of Texas, Austin. Weinberg is also considered one of the foremost physicists in the country today. A prolific writer on diverse subjects besides science, he is a popular speaker at all sorts of events. He is extensively covered in Google.

The book is a collection of his writings for several scientific journals covering scientific theories like “Waiting for the Final Theory”. He comments on missile defense programs, space programs, and political influence on appropriations for science projects.

He speaks forcefully and with conviction in what he believes to be the higher priority programs and is outspoken against manned space flights, calling them sideshows, when unmanned robotic space probes would be far more useful and considerably less costly.

Weinberg is an atheist and feels religions have caused more problems than they have solved. His feeling is that the advent of the scientific age has relegated religion to mere superstition.

Attempting to explain how things work at the subatomic level, as well as what makes up the universe, he gets into “dark matter and dark energy” which make up the greater mass of the universe. Speculating on the Big Bang and how there may be successive Big Bang’s or even multi-universes, he delves into the string theory and perhaps 10 or more dimensions, All very esoteric stuff.

There is very little super technical jargon or diagramming. He is an excellent writer and brings an astonishing broad background, in history and literature, as well as a profound understanding of the sciences, to bear on the topics he explores. His blunt and unapologetic dismissal of any divine influence on how things came about, or are progressing, can be annoying if one has religious beliefs. His attitude about the afterlife is simply that there is none. Just accept it and face it with equanimity. There is no doubt that Weinberg is a remarkable person and I enjoyed the book very much. I’m glad I stumbled on to it.

Read a fascinating or intriguing book lately ?

Write a review (300 – 800 words) and share your experience with the BLL community.

E-Mail to Jim Mills jmills43@comcast.net or to Suzanne McInerney smcinerney21@comcast.net and have your review printed in an upcoming BLL Book Review.

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Clockwork Universe

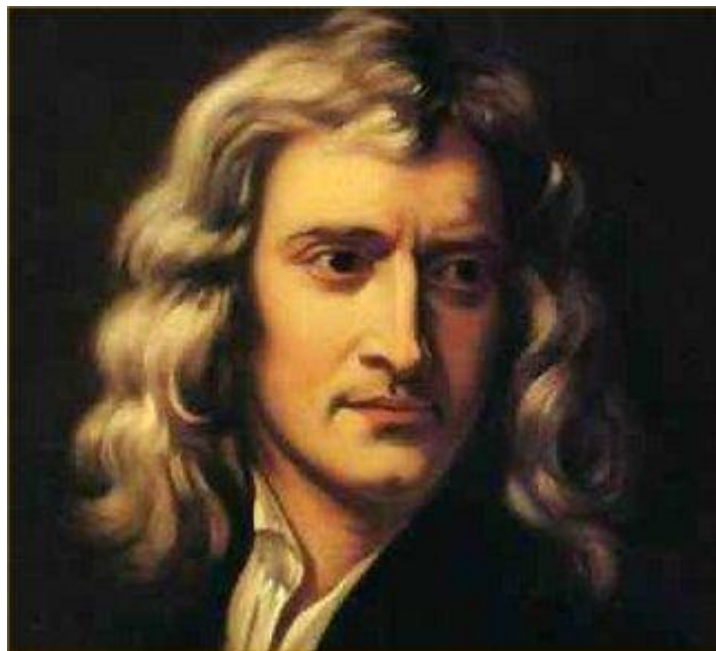
by Edward Dolnick

reviewed by Jim Mills

One of the subtle pleasures of historical reading is the understanding that life today has immeasurably improved over that experienced by our predecessors. That observation is particularly true of the time period covered by *The Clockwork Universe*, the 1600's in Europe. While Edward Dolnick writes primarily about scientific progress during that century, much emphasis is placed on the status of the contemporary society that produced such scientific giants as Kepler, Galileo, Leibnitz, and Newton. The 17th century was a time of widespread ignorance, disease, cruelty and abysmal poverty to an extent that is hard to comprehend today. In countries such as Britain or France daily executions were staged as a public family entertainment. In the mid-1660s London was devastated by the twin catastrophes of bubonic plague and a ravaging fire. This was the same period when Isaac Newton, evacuated to the countryside, laid the foundation of his revolutionary concepts of calculus, optics, motion and gravitation.

The advent of rational scientific thought was a slow and tortuous process. Leading scientific thinkers of the period combined the new era of careful deductive reasoning with the inclusion of common superstitions and misconceptions. Newton, who is considered a paragon of logical and lucid reasoning, also dabbled for years in the pseudo-scientific field of alchemy. Despite all of the missteps and misdirection, science made a significant transition to the cogent field of study that we know today during the 17th century. Dolnick highlights the personal foibles of these scientific pioneers and the intense competition between them. Newton and Leibnitz, in particular, were such sharp rivals over their independent discovery of calculus. Neither could acknowledge the claims or merits of the other. Kepler, in his effort to find a rational basis for observed planetary motion, went down many blind alleys for many years before finally discovering the reality of elliptical orbits.

Dolnick provides a very interesting version of the often told story of the birth of scientific thought following the Renaissance. His description of Galileo's experimental procedures is very clear and describes the ingenuity that Galileo employed considering the technical limitations of the time. To this reviewer *The Clockwork Universe* provides a wealth of information on the social limitations that each of these scientific pioneers had to overcome in creating the modern era of reasoned and rational thought. The irrational beliefs and delusions that were so prevalent in Europe at that time is found today only in the most backward parts of our globe. Our emergence from a long history of ignorance and superstition is most fortunate for us and we owe a debt of gratitude to those who started the ball rolling four hundred years ago.



Issac Newton

Admiral “Bull” Halsey

by John Wukovits

reviewed by James N. McCutcheon

William F. “Bull” Halsey (1882-1959) remains one of the strangest combinations of rare gifts and immense shortcomings to join an indispensable handful of U.S. Navy Admirals, and Marine and Army Generals who during World War II won the Pacific War. Descended from a line of buccaneers and sea captains, his late 19th century decision to follow in the footsteps of his father and become a U.S. Naval officer was his sole purpose in life during his growing up years. President McKinley appointed him to Annapolis in 1900.

Halsey was only a mediocre student at the Naval Academy but a better than average fullback on the Academy’s football team. He graduated from Annapolis in 1904 and after the requisite two years of sea duty as a midshipman, first on the USS Missouri and then aboard the USS Don Juan de Austria, was promoted to Ensign USN. A year later he was posted to the USS Kansas, a sparkling new battleship that was not quite out of the shipyard. He made Teddy Roosevelt’s Round the World cruise in 1907 on the USS Kansas, the flagship of a grand fleet of 16 battleships sent on that journey to impress upon the world, and particularly the Japanese, who had just defeated the principal battle fleet of Russia, about this country’s naval might.

In 1909 and now as a LT(jg), Halsey was given command of the USS DuPont Torpedo Boat #7 which was followed over the next 6 years, with command of three destroyers, the USS Lamson, the USS Flusser and the USS Jarvis. So began Halsey’s 25 year love of destroyers which, with breaks for shore duty and various embassy assignments lasted until 1934 when he reported to the Naval Air Station at Pensacola for flight training. He was designated a Naval Aviator in 1935, and now as a Captain USN he began a two year tour as commanding officer of the USS Saratoga. When he reached Flag rank he became Commander of Carrier Division two with his flag on the USS Yorktown . He was on the USS Enterprise when World War II broke out. In April of 1942 and on that ship Vice Admiral Halsey commanding Task Force 16, escorted the USS Hornet to within 800 miles of Tokyo where Jimmy Doolittle’s Army Air Force bombers were launched for the first successful attack on the Japanese homeland and the American response to Japan’s December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor. From that point on, for the remaining 3 1/2 years of World War II, “Bull” Halsey was never out of the news or off the top of the Imperial Japanese Navy’s most wanted list. In October of 1942, just 5 months after Doolittle’s raid on Tokyo, Halsey was promoted to the rank of Admiral and made Commander of all South Pacific Naval Forces. For the next two years “Bull” Halsey was almost constantly at sea, leading the ever enlarging U.S. carrier forces in the South Pacific in what were for the most part highly successful attacks on main Japanese bases and main elements of the Japanese fleet.

However, despite this success, the only things that allowed him to survive several General Court Martials, undertaken by superiors who wanted to sack him either for major mistakes in strategy or for directly disobeying orders were (1) that, after the major American Naval defeats of 1941 the American public needed just such a profane, patriotic, hard living, fearless, fighting Admiral to lift its spirits and restore its will to continue in what would become a long and brutal war; (2) that Halsey was an excellent communicator especially where his own reputation and the media were concerned; and (3) that he cared deeply about the men he commanded and, in both good times and bad, they and the American people always returned the favor.

John Wukovits, the excellent military historian, whose special expertise was narrative history based on solid research, catches both the good and the regrettable in “Bull” Halsey’s 45year Naval career. This reviewer found the most fascinating parts of Wukovits’ *Admiral “Bull” Halsey* to be the several chapters on The Battle of Leyte Gulf, when the Japanese devised and sprang a trap that came within a few hours and one overly cautious Japanese Admiral of destroying the invasion force for the Philippines and its much weaker Naval support force; and two of the largest ever typhoons to lash the seas in which Halsey’s fleet was operating. A failure to suspend fueling the destroyers in time, whose ballast tanks were empty, sent three of these ships and 800 men to the bottom. Subsequent failures both by the meteorologists and Halsey seriously damaged some 40 other major ships, caused other men to needlessly die, and at least 400 indispensable planes, from the carriers’ bomber, torpedo, and fighter squadrons were damaged beyond repair. After finally escaping the typhoons and collecting his ship, that were now spread over 2500 miles of the Pacific Ocean, Halsey had no choice but to immediately break off action and take his seriously wounded fleet into Ulithe for repairs.

There two General Court Martials found him guilty of matters serious enough to have permanently crippled or finished his Naval career. Once again, his superiors, this time Admirals Nimitz and King, refused to relieve him from duty. Halsey was still considered too valuable to lose. So at the end of the war the surrender documents with the Japanese were signed in Tokyo Bay and on Halsey’s flagship, the USS Missouri. When the U.S. Navy decided that it would appoint just 4 Fleet Admirals, to match those ranks in the British Navy, Fleet Admiral “Bull” Halsey on December 11, 1945 was the 4th and final one selected. William Frederick “Bull” Halsey died on 16 August 1959. Halsey, whose accomplishments considerably outweighing his demerits, remains one of an indispensable handful of Admirals and Generals who won the Pacific War and defeated the Japanese in World War II.

Emily, Alone

by Stewart O’Nan

reviewed by Suzanne McInerney

It’s hard to imagine that someone (like me) who has been in middle age for some time could be so cheered up by this book about a woman named Emily Maxwell, an 80-year-old widow who almost never sees her children and grandchildren, whose beautiful neighborhood in Pittsburgh is perishing, and whose day revolves mostly around her doggie’s needs except on Tuesdays, when she joins her sister-in-law for the Eat ‘n Park’s two-for-one breakfast buffet.

But read it I did after hearing the author, Stewart O’Nan, in an interview on Public Radio. He’s still a very young man, so he must have an amazing sensibility and strong antennae for human beings of any age. And his answers to the interviewer seemed anything but self-centered or vain. His optimism and bright outlook on life shine through every sentence he writes, and it comes out in his main character. Emily is a relatively uncomplicated, genteel woman of the old school in which pleasant manners were taken for granted. Another virtue taken for granted is a kind of agreeable stoicism and toughness, all rolled into one. Emily never once feels sorry for herself. She rarely, if ever complains, finding solace in her classical music radio station, writing thank you notes, and humoring her aging dog, Rufus. Nor does she shy away from the realization that she is “at an age.”

She was dying, yes, fine, they all were, by degrees. If Dr. Sayid expected her to be devastated by the idea, that only showed how young he was. There was no point in going into hysterics. It wasn’t the end of the world, just the end of her, and lately she’d come to think that was natural, and possibly something to be desired, if it could be achieved with a modicum of dignity. . .

In one scene, as she puts on a favorite necklace for a rare evening out at her old country club, she remembers how her husband Henry used to fasten it for her. She could see him in the mirror, admiring her, and hear him saying she is beautiful. It is a dark moment of loss, but in O’Nan’s hands it is a simple jewel of prose whose lack of sentimentality makes it all the more poignant.

One day, at the Eat ‘n Park breakfast buffet, Emily’s sister-in-law, Arlene, suffers what seems to be a minor stroke. The new change in routine—Arlene always drove them to places—causes a big change in Emily’s normally predictable schedule. She now organizes things for Arlene (who is also alone) and decides to take her husband Henry’s Oldsmobile out of the garage where it has been for ten years. In the course of getting help from her neighbor with the car, re-learning the streets of Pittsburgh, and growing suddenly into a more independent woman with specific responsibilities and satisfactions, Emily becomes more and more able simply to enjoy her children and grandchildren the few times she does see them, and to look at life as an ongoing but very happy occasion. She prepares for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter, hosting her family with kindness and care, but she does not invest these occasions with high hopes—simply an understanding that somehow her life has been and continues, in its own way, to be a blessing.

The book ends as Emily undertakes a car trip in the Oldsmobile to visit the rural Pennsylvania area of her childhood. She remembers her mother in a newer light. And the story of her own life as she tells it to herself is more realistic. It is also somehow happier and gives her a kind of grace.

There is no high drama in this book, but I could not put it down. I was fascinated by and drawn to Emily. I was cheering for her to keep up her wonderful spirit because she kept mine up, too.

Note: In *Wish You Were Here* (2002), O’Nan tells the story of Emily ten years before *Emily, Alone*. It received excellent reviews.



Stewart O’Nan

Naturally Selected – Why some people lead, while others follow, and why it matters the evolutionary science of leadership.

by Mark van Vugt, PhD and Anjana Ahuja, PhD

reviewed by Don Boink

Mark Van Vugt is a professor at the VU University Amsterdam and a research associate at the University of Oxford. Anjana Ahuja, a PhD in space physics, is a writer for the London Times. The authors have come up with a concept of how to explain why some individuals become leaders and others followers. They dubbed their story “(the) Evolutionary Leadership Theory”, or ELT.

Drawing largely on Darwin’s origin of species and Freud’s references to it, ELT finds its roots in the earliest experiences of man on the savanna of Africa. Here the first law of nature is survival. Those who accomplished this feat and went on to reproduce were successful in large part, due to those who provided leadership and those wise enough to follow. Parallels are drawn from the animal kingdom, especially the primates, our closest cousins. Survival is more likely if one is part of a cohesive group. How cohesive the group is depends a great deal on the leaders. Leaders emerged based on their ability to defend the clan, find food and water, and assert their dominance.

Leadership has its perks, called here the three S’s – Salary (or largess), Status, and Sex. From the genetic standpoint the leadership factor is likely to be more widely disseminated because more females are attracted to the trait. Followership is a corollary to the above. Without followers the presence of leadership is meaningless. It takes followers to enable leaders. As leaders come in different flavors so do followers. As the book goes from chapter to chapter the author re- caps previous points, or examples, and then tells what the next chapter deals with. Some of this redundancy becomes annoying at times.

Several anecdotal instances in history are informative, interesting, and supportive of the book’s basic premise. There is frequent reference back to our origins on the savanna and how our primitive reactions are hardwired into our psyches. These ever present traits lie just below the thin veneer of civilization as we know it today. Leadership can be based on a number of different characteristics. The popular one is usually dictated by the circumstances of the time. Obviously not all leaders that emerge are good choices. At times it is difficult to correct those poor choices. A number of examples are given.

The authors claim that the ELT is greatly different from other explanations of how leaders are either “made, not born,” or vice versa. The appendix contains a quiz to evaluate the type of leader you are. There is also a table showing the evolution of the forms of leadership, plus a glossary and index.

The book discusses and amplifies the aspects of leadership that both make leaders good, bad or mediocre. From the blurb – “...full of fascinating examples drawn from politics, commerce, sports, and culture this book explains:

- Why tall presidential candidates usually beat short ones.
- Why great athletes make lousy managers.
- Why we don’t like working for large companies.
- Why women chief executives attract hostility
- Why middle managers are universally reviled”

This evolutionary psychology challenges everything we knew about leadership.

If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.

John Quincy Adams

Voices from Chernobyl: The Oral History of a Nuclear Disaster

By Svetlana Alexievich

Reviewed by Jim Mills

The recent nuclear reactor calamity that followed the massive Japanese earthquake and tsunami started this reviewer searching for a chronicle of, what so far has been, a far greater tragedy, the 1986 Chernobyl accident. *Voices from Chernobyl* provides the testimony, from all walks of life, of the disaster's survivors. *Voices* was written ten years after the event in 1997 and is still available within the CLAMS system. The Chernobyl nuclear reactor was located in what then was the Soviet Union but is now in north central Ukraine. The prevailing winds at the time of the accident, however, insured that the resulting radioactive fallout fell primarily on the Soviet province to the north, what is now country of Belarus. Approximately one-quarter of that nation's land was contaminated with nuclear fission products whose half-lives of around thirty years insure problems extending centuries into the future. Direct fatalities from the nuclear mishap are estimated at 4,000 with possibly tens of thousands more faced with chronic disease and shortened lives.

A striking feature of the Chernobyl disaster was the apparent indifference of the Soviet government to the welfare of its citizens. Emergency workers were rushed to the accident site with no protective gear or warning for extended periods. Some of these groups were to suffer 100% fatality rates. Many of the inhabitants of the fallout regions were not warned about eating locally grown produce or provided with any face masks to provide breathing protection. In fact, much of this irradiated produce was distributed, without warning, in the rest of the country. The treatment of the citizenry was a basis of much of their prevalent sarcastic humor: "Guy comes home from work, says to his wife, 'They told me that tomorrow I either go to Chernobyl or hand in my Party card.' 'But you're not in the Party.' 'Right, so I'm wondering how do I get a Party card by tomorrow morning.'" Years of disregard of government rules led many individuals to go into the evacuated areas, steal goods that had been left behind and sell these radioactive products in other areas of the country. Leading scientists did their best to prod government officials to take action to protect the population but with little effect even as a radioactive cloud approached the Belarus capitol, Minsk. A large stock of Potassium Iodide that was available was not distributed for protection against thyroid cancers.

Parts of *Voices from Chernobyl* are difficult to read with the widespread suffering depicted. Many of those telling their stories were uneducated and did not really understand just what had befallen them. Some of the testimony of former leaders is defensive. The best overall view is provided by some of the scientists who had a larger view and were relatively more honest in their appraisal. The Chernobyl and Japanese experiences are basically different with the more open approach in Japan and the greater concern for its citizens. Chernobyl was unquestionably a man-made disaster versus the natural one in Japan. Both of these events do provide a warning to us all about the potential dangers hiding in the numerous nuclear reactors in the world and, in a Global Warming world, of the need to consider these possibilities in considering our energy options.

Heaven Is For Real

by Todd Burpo

reviewed by James N. McCutcheon

Todd Burpo is the pastor of the Crossroads Wesleyan Church in Imperial Nebraska, population 1,762. He also works at the Chase County Public Schools as a wrestling coach, serves on the local School Board, and is a member of the Imperial Volunteer Fire Department. In order to make ends meet he and his wife Sonja operate a company he started called Overhead Door Specialists. The couple has 3 kids, a girl and two boys. Burpo graduated from Oklahoma Wesleyan University *summa cum laude* in 1991 with a BA in Theology.

Heaven Is For Real is a fascinating book about Colton Burpo, Todd and Sonja's four year old son who had a "near death" experience during an emergency appendectomy in which he claims he went to heaven and came back. I learned about the book from a member of a very respectable book club in Virginia Beach VA, that usually only reads top of the charts books from the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal, dealing with history, foreign and domestic affairs, and first line novels.

But a number of things led me to read the copy of *Heaven Is For Real* that came enclosed with the letter. Thomas Nelson is the publisher; over one million copies are already in print; the book was for sometime a #1 New York Times best seller; and in my over half century as senior minister of three large parishes of the United (Continued Next Page)

Church of Christ (UCC) I have come across a number of such experiences, most of which I didn't believe and the several that still fascinate me, I have never previously talked, preached or written about.

Colton Burpo's experience is one of the latter. Therefore I decided to devote this book report to a brief account of Colton Burpo's near death or possibly better, "out of body" experience and an account of the one "out of body" experience, in my own pastoral ministry, that still most mystifies me.

Colton's trip to heaven began in 2003 as a family trip to Greeley Colorado for a district board meeting of the Wesleyan Church that Todd was obliged to attend. The day before the trip to Greeley began Colton started complaining that his stomach hurt. He was sick all that night with a high fever, but by the next morning his fever had broken and Colton was his old self again. So the family trip to Greeley got under way. That very first night in Greeley Colton became even more violently ill. Now he was throwing up every half hour and had not been able to hold anything down all day.

The Burpos quickly made up their minds that instead of going to the hospital in Greeley, they would drive home as fast as they could and put Colton in the hospital at Imperial. Colton was a limp and lifeless looking little boy when the physicians in Imperial began to look him over. A number of x-rays and blood tests consumed most of that first day. The physicians found nothing. Now desperate and out of ideas, the physicians at Imperial referred Colton to the Regional Medical Center in North Platte Colorado. There they ordered a CAT Scan and minutes later they finally had their answer. Colton had a burst appendix, the infection had spread throughout his abdomen, he was in very poor shape, and as soon as the surgeon became available they would operate.

After Several more days in the ICU and just when the Burpos thought the danger was past, a final series of lab tests revealed another abscess and Dr. O'Holleran had to operate on Colton again. Colton survived that surgery as well, but then a blockage almost finished what the surgical ordeal hadn't. However a day later, almost as a miracle, Colton passed gas and a day after that the Burpos were on their way home with their four year old son.

It was after the family got home, that Colton began to talk about his trip to heaven. He said the angels sang to him, that he sat on Jesus' lap and then he announced he had talked with a grandfather and a younger sister who had died long before he was born. But what was most interesting to me was that his first recollection was of being high above the ceiling of the operating theatre, watching the doctors who were working on him, and seeing his parents who were in the waiting room praying for him,

My most mystifying personal encounter with a "near death"- "out of body" experience occurred sometime in the early 1970s, when I was the Senior Minister of the First Congregational Church of Kalamazoo Michigan. I had been out of the office all afternoon, calling on the parish "shut-ins", and returned to the church office about 4:00 PM, to find the place in an uproar. One of our church secretaries, Blanche Curtis, a lovely 60 year old widow, had apparently had a serious heart attack an hour or so earlier and had been rushed off to the hospital in an unconscious state. I was at her bedside in the ICU ten minutes later.

A husky intern was administering CPR and they had obviously just given Blanche a series of electric-shock treatments that had not returned her to consciousness or her heart to its normal rhythm. The cardiologist who was in charge told me he didn't expect they would be able to save her, and suggested that I come back later. For the next six days I was at her bedside early each morning and again just before suppertime. I stayed for about 20 minutes, always offering prayer before I left. There was no change in Blanche's condition that I could see and clearly the physicians were just making sure she was comfortable.

Then on the sixth afternoon about 4:00 o'clock, I had just seated myself at her bedside and taken her hand when Blanche opened her eyes, smiled, and said "How nice to see you Jim". I was speechless. "Blanche" I blurted out, "how do you feel". "Just fine" she answered. "What happened to you?" I said. "I'm not exactly sure", she said, "I remember that nice young Intern giving me CPR, and then I was somewhere above the ceiling looking at all the nurses and doctors trying to help me, and then I found myself in a dark tunnel with a beautiful bright light at the end, and then I heard my mother and my late husband calling me. Then the light at the end of the tunnel winked out, and everything went black. The next thing I knew you were sitting at my bedside and here we are. Jim, I'm never going to be afraid to die again."

Blanche's room was now rapidly filling up with nurses and doctors. The two nurses who had been caring for her over the last six days were now weeping. The cardiologist, who had attended her asked me, "Reverend, what did you do to Blanche?" "Absolutely nothing", I replied. "Well this is a true miracle! he said. Blanche Curtis left the hospital a week later and returned to her desk in the church office shortly after that.

I'm not going to offer any personal opinions about all this, beyond the following. There have been dozens of professional studies of "near death" or "out of body" experiences and the consensus conclusion is that they are real. How you or I interpret them depends upon what intellectual and faith commitments we bring to the event. Read "Heaven Is For Real". You'll be, as I was, very glad you did!

Blur

by Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel

reviewed by Don Boink

The authors, two of the nation's most celebrated media critics and respected journalists have written a pragmatic serious-minded guide to navigating the 21st century's media terrain. Their objective is to provide a roadmap for all citizens to navigate present culture by revealing the tradecraft great journalists have used to sift rumor from fact and access truths. Both authors are associated with the "Project For Excellence in Journalism", a think tank that studies the press and is part of the Pew Research Center in Washington.

Evidence of very early communications, about 15,000 BC, has been found represented in cave drawings in Altamira, Spain and Lascaux, France. Depicted in the drawings were two striking characteristics. Both caves feature pictures of hunting and tentatively, illustrations of star clusters that suggest some kind of spiritual communication, a searching for answers about the place of humans in the universe. That is, that which is temporal and empirical and that which is based on beliefs about that which cannot be proven. Oral language is believed to have begun around 6000 BC. In succession occurred written language, then the epochal transformation via the printing press.

The expansion of literacy led to the testing of generalizations by observation boosting empirical thought. The Gutenberg Bible led to the Reformation and the end of the clerical monopoly on thought. Eventually we recognized the birth of journalism. The spread of information led to the concept that people could be self-governing. Thus, Western civilizations greatest fruit, democracy, is itself a product of the evolution of communication.

Carried to the extreme, today we are blessed by the 24/7 news cycle. Be it a blessing or a curse depends on one's ability to handle it. "Blur" attempts to sort out the several facets of the bombardment by identifying and evaluating them. The book gives several examples of people and events that illustrate good and, not so good, journalism.

To help understand better the news vendors and talk shows purporting to "analyze" the news requires a kind of categorizing them. Quoting from the book:

"Broadly considered there are four distinct models.

- Journalism of verification, a traditional model that puts the highest value on accuracy and context.
- Journalism of Assertion – a newer model that puts the highest value on immediacy and volume and tends to become a passive conduit of information.
- Journalism of Affirmation – a new political media that builds loyalty less on accuracy, completeness, or verification then on affirming the beliefs of its audiences and tends to cherry pick information that serves that purpose.
- Interest group journalism, which includes targeting websites or pieces of work, often investigative, that are usually funded by special interests rather than media institutions and designed to look like news"

"In some cases, the people producing the material are not even aware of what model they are operating under. They adapt to new technology, grope to maintain an audience, and even to innovate, and bow to financial pressure."

The various networks, ABC, NBC, CBS and CNN and talk shows are used as illustration. The authors go into detail on the several types of today's communication phenomenon. For good or bad, how the general public adapts to the miasma of "information" will determine our government and our society and our overall community.

Blur is a very thought-provoking and informative book for those confused by the onslaught of the "news".

Anonymous sources are a practice of American journalism in the 20th and 21st century, a relatively recent practice. The literary tradition of anonymity goes back to the Bible.

Joe Klein

Silk Parachute

By John McPhee

Reviewed by Jim Mills

This reviewer has been a fan of John McPhee's eclectic style of writing for forty years or so. McPhee opens up the wonders of the everyday world to his readers and does so in an interesting and conversational style. His earlier books cover topics ranging from Oranges to Nuclear Reactors to bizarre aircraft developments in his native Princeton, NJ. As he explains in his latest book, *Silk Parachutes*, he has always lived in the same zip code even before there were zip codes. Earlier journalistic efforts include descriptions of the lives of those who daily provide fresh produce to New York, operate mile long coal trains heading from Wyoming eastward and the conveyance of equally long trains of barges on the nation's rivers. In a series of five books extending from *Coming into the Country* to *Assembling California*, McPhee has explored the geological history that has shaped our nation and the impact of that geology on our lives. In *In Suspect Terrain*, McPhee even shows the influence of Manhattan bed rock contours on the city's skyline. His biographical entries include books on Princeton basketball star and former U.S. Senator Bill Bradley in a *Sense of Where You Are* and the former Sierra Club president and ecologist, David Brower, in *Encounters with the Archdruid*. Other McPhee titles cover investigations into the operations of the Swiss Army, the life of Scottish crofters, and the building of birch bark canoes in northern New England.

It seems that there is no human activity on this planet that has escaped McPhee's purview. His latest effort, the 28th in line, *Silk Parachutes*, continues McPhee's passion with explaining our world to us. As usual, his newest book provides an eclectic mix of topics. Several are personal, touching on his childhood in Princeton, flying silk parachutes and learning how to canoe and his description of his daughter's photographic career. The longest entry is a description and history of a little known sport, lacrosse. Originating with Native Americans, lacrosse, initially caught on among the European immigrants in Ontario, Canada and in the US in the neighborhood of Baltimore, Maryland. While still infrequently played in America, the sport is increasing in popularity. Continuing with his geological inclinations, McPhee describes the extensive areas of chalk that covers southern Britain, northern France and extending into the Netherlands. The resulting soil lends itself to the production of wine, particularly Champagne. The caves and tunnels in the chalk foundation played a significant role in Dutch resistance efforts in WW 2. McPhee provides a geological history of the area including the formation of the English Channel from a vigorously flowing river as the extensive British glacial deposits melted over ten thousand years ago sharply widening the channel as it cut back the soft chalk cliffs. Even today the Cliffs of Dover are receding at the rate of a foot a year, a little slower, however, than that of some of our Outer Cape cliffs.

Two other segments in *Silk Parachutes* explore the world of fact checking for articles to be published in the *New Yorker* and the world of professional golf and the treatment and role of journalists who cover that sport. McPhee has written for the *New Yorker* for all of his professional life and many of his books are compendiums of these articles. McPhee explains the great extent that the magazine's fact checkers go to verify the truth of his many assertions, efforts that extend up to hours before publication. Any reader who has an interest in Non Fiction writing and has not experienced McPhee is encouraged by this reviewer to do so. Virtually any of his numerous titles provide fascinating reading. Strongly recommended titles include: *The Control of Nature*, *Uncommon Carriers*, *Looking for a Ship*, *The Ransom of Russian Art* and his bestselling *Coming into the Country*.

The Roots of Obama's Rage

by Dinesh D'Souza

reviewed by James N. McCutcheon

Dinesh D'Souza's latest book, *The Roots Of Obama's Rage*, published just a month ago, has already provoked a firestorm of comment, over 400 book reviews, and, in my case several night's sleep. The reason the President of Kings College in New York City apparently decided to take on this explosive subject is because of a feeling that most Americans don't really understand President Barack Obama, and because of their similar backgrounds he, Dinesh D'Souza, is in a unique position to supply that lack.

(Continued on Next Page)

Dr. D'Souza was born in the same year as Barack Obama. He was born and grew up in a former British colony, India; and, although Obama was born in Hawaii, his father came from another former British colony, Kenya. Dr. D'Souza has a white wife and President Obama a white mother; hence both have experienced racially mixed family lives. Both men attended Ivy League colleges from which they graduated in the same year and both have since spent their adult lives working in the field of public policy. However here is where the similarities end. Dr. D'Souza is a research scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and Stanford University and a New York Times Best Selling Author who has published a half-dozen books. President Barack Obama is a Harvard trained lawyer, a community organizer and liberal activist, and author of two best-selling books, *Dreams From My Father*, written just after he graduated from Law School, and *The Audacity of Hope*, a campaign biography.

Barack Obama's *Dreams From My Father*, takes its departure from the person who, according to Dr. D'Souza, really shaped the world and, in his opinion, supplied the rage that colors so much of our President's thinking. Barack Obama Sr. was a brilliant and charismatic politician, who fathered at least a half-dozen children by a number of different women. His very promising political career as an anti-colonial bureaucrat and political activist in Indonesia and Kenya was ended by his own weaknesses of character and uncontrolled alcoholism, which led to a number of automobile accidents, the death of a pedestrian in one of them, the loss of both his own legs in another, and his own death in a third. Barack Obama Jr. only ever saw his father once, and that as a 10 year old child when his father visited his class room in Hawaii for only a couple of hours and charmed his teacher and fellow students, long after he had divorced and abandoned Barack Obama Jr. and moved on to Indonesia.

Stanley Ann Dunham, our President's mother, was a white college student from Kansas, who met Barack Obama Sr. when they were both students at the University of Hawaii. She was already an anti-colonial activist when they were married, and even after Barack Obama Sr. abandoned both her and Barack Obama Jr., his mother never stopped loving him or supporting him with her son. Ms. Duncan eventually moved on to Indonesia, taking young Barack with her, and married still another anti-colonial activist, who apparently was for sometime a mentor and role model for young Barack Jr. Stanley Ann also produced a daughter with her Indonesian husband before she divorced him for, as she said, becoming part of the Indonesian colonial establishment. Stanley Ann Duncan died in Hawaii several years before the beginning of Barack Obama's Presidency.

Bill Ayres, Franz Fanon, and the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, all anti-colonial radicals helped Barack Obama Jr. reshape his African anti-colonial message so as to fit into the African American Civil Rights agenda. The title of Obama's second book, *The Audacity Of Hope* was taken from one of Rev. Wright's sermons, in whose church our President was, for 20 years and until quite recently, a member. According to Dr. D'Souza, Obama never cared about Martin Luther King or the African American Civil Rights agenda nor has he, to date offered its programs any serious support, a fact that led Civil Rights leaders such as Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton to say that President Obama has betrayed his own people.

Obama's so-called "Apology Tour" of first world nations shortly after he entered in upon the Presidency and his refusal to wear the American flag on the lapel of his suit are a part of the public record, but the return of the bust of Winston Churchill to Great Britain, given as a token of support and sympathy to this country immediately after the frightful 9/11 terrorist attack that took over 3,000 lives in New York City, was, according to Dr. D'Souza possibly the clearest evidence, of our President's fixation on anti-colonialism, and his hatred for banks, insurance companies, mineral deposits and commerce, the tools of exploitation, Obama believes, employed by first world countries, including our own to impoverish both third world country and poor people everywhere. A bust of Prime Minister Winston Churchill, not the Allied hero of World War II but the last great champion of the British Empire, therefore to President Barack Obama, had no place whatsoever in the Oval Office of the President of the United States.

The Roots Of Obama's Rage is a very important book. A scholar of Dr. D'Souza's standing cannot be ignored. Depending on facts drawn principally from Obama's two books *Dreams From My Father* and *The Audacity Of Hope* and Obama's other public statements, Dinesh D'Souza has fashioned a tightly reasoned 220 page essay, laying out what he feels all Americans need to understand about where our President is coming from and what he believes.

It's long since time for all Americans to discover for himself or herself what these might be. Read President Barack Obama's *Dreams Of My Father* (even as I did for the second time) and Dinesh D'Souza's *The Roots Of Obama's Rage* and come to your own opinion where all this is taking our country.