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Bet You Missed It—What do green tomatoes and dust have in common?

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Bet You Missed It

Press Clippings — In the News — Carefully Selected by Your Crack Staff of News Sleuths

Column Editor: Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Editor’s Note: Hey, are y’all reading this? If you know of an article that should be called to Against the Grain’s attention ... send an email to <ksstrauch@comcast.net>. We’re listening! — KS

HISTORY NOT DRY AS DUST

by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Barbara Tuchman was a child of the NY German-Jewish aristocracy. Her grandfather Henry Morgenthau, Sr. was Wilson’s ambassador to the Ottoman Empire; her uncle Henry Morgenthau was Roosevelt’s Treasury Secretary. She was educated at Radcliffe, wrote for The Nation, which her father owned, and reported on the Spanish Civil War. Then came “The Guns of August,” “The Proud Tower,” and “Stilwell and the American Experience in China.” Pulitzer prizes and huge commercial success.

She disliked T.V., the teleprompter, and the digitization of the Library of Congress catalog. She believed in primary sources, visiting the sites of historic events, and being in love with your subject.

And the true key to her success? Never getting a Ph.D. “It’s what saved me, I think.”


LUST BETWEEN HIDDEN COVERS

by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)


THEY READ IN LAS VEGAS

by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

There is indeed a non-Strip Vegas, and it even has a distinguished bookstore, The Amber Unicorn, specializing in cookbooks. Ruth Reichl, author of Tender at the Bone (Random House, 1997), found it the perfect neon antidote and fled there whenever the glitz became overwhelming. Owners Myrna Donato and husband Lou want you to not just buy but to treasure their books and love conversation on recipes and memorable meals.

The author scooped up a first edition of The Alice B. Toklas Cook Book, Aunt Sammy’s Radio Recipes, and a signed copy of Louis Szathmary’s American Gastronomy.

See — Ruth Reichl, “All Hail the King and Queen of Cookbooks,” Saveur, April, 2012, p.52.

HARD-BOILED REVIEWER

by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Brian Kellow has done the biography of autocratic, quirky, larger-than-life movie critic Pauline Kael. Pauline Kael: A Life in the Dark (Viking, 417 pages, $27.95). She grew up on a chicken ranch in Petaluma, fifth child of Polish-Jewish immigrants. She worked as a seamstress, cook, and violin teacher until age 48 when she found her métier on the New Yorker.

Her “lousy,” “crummy,” “stinker” street lingo drove her editor up the wall, and she feuded for decades with critic Andrew Sarris of The Village Voice. She favored “trash” over self-conscious “art,” boozed with Robert Altman, adored Sam Peckinpah, and scoffed at Alfred Hitchcock. Her power was only eclipsed by the rise of Siskel and Ebert’s At the Movies.


BOHEMIANS IN SPITE OF THEMSELVES

by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Surrealist photographer Man Ray scuttled out of Paris to L.A. during WWII and there met and married Juliet Browner, a pixie-haired dancer from the Bronx. It was a double wedding with Max Ernst and Dorothea Tanning.

Post-war, the Rays met her family one time on the way back to Paris. The Browners were Bronx-type folks, which is to say salesmen and cops. Not an artsy soul among them. Juliet’s brother Eric was a high-school dropout who upholstered cars.

The Rays went on to a Paris life in a sculptor’s studio and summering in castles with the Picassos. Man died in 1976, and Juliet in 1991. Suddenly the Browners found themselves in charge of The Man Ray Trust and plunged into the art world. Much of the works were sold to the French government for estate taxes, and there was a $9.5 million sale at Sotheby’s.

What’s left is stored in Eric Browner’s Long Island car repair shop. They want $20 million for it, but art dealers say the value is closer to $6 million. The Browners are hanging tough.


GREEN TOMATO KETCHUP, OKRA SOUP, BENEDICTINE SPREAD, BUTTERMILK BOURBON PIE

by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Dean Fearing’s eponymous restaurant in Dallas’s palatial Ritz-Carlton is world class. His inspiration comes from a personal library of 600 vintage cookbooks found in antique stores in small towns. He seeks “grandma” cooking from a time before industrial food.

A pre-refrigeration cookbook described submerging skimmed game in a vat of molasses seasoned with black pepper. This led him to marinating filets of buffalo and backstraps of venison in maple syrup with garlic, shallots, red pepper, thyme, and sage, a number-one seller in his restaurant for going on five years.

Most of his collection is southern, but he treasures an 1896 edition of The Cook Book by Oscar Tschirky, Waldorf-Astoria maître d’ who devised veal Oscar and eggs Benedict.