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Charleston Conference Future Dates

Editor

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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 <kstrauch@comcast.net>. We're listening! — **KS**

WALLENBERG ARCHIVE by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

The acclaim for **Raoul Wallenberg** for his rescue of 20,000 Jews in Budapest came long after his arrest and murder by the Soviets. At the time, the craven Swedish Foreign Office was so frightened of alienating Russia that they refused to lift a hand to save him.

His parents and half-siblings spent six decades seeking him, in the process losing their savings, their mental health and the parents' lives through suicide. They left behind a 50,000-page archive detailing their quest. This story joins the writings of **Elie Wiesel**, **Anne Frank**, and **William Styron** as a history of the Holocaust.

See — **Joshua Prager**, "The Wallenberg Curse," *The Wall Street Journal*, Feb. 28, 2009, p.A1.

TOP NOVELS ON THE GREAT DEPRESSION by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Your reading list for the pending collapse: (1) *Now in November*, by **Josephine Winslow Johnson** (Simon & Schuster, 1934); (2) *The Big Money*, by **John Dos Passos** (Harcourt, Brace, 1936); (3) *Appointment in Samarra*, by **John O'Hara** (Harcourt, Brace, 1934); (4) *The Good Earth* by **Pearl Buck** (John Day, 1931); (5) *The Day of the Locust* by **Nathanael West** (Random House, 1939).

See — **Peter Conn**, "Five Best," *The Wall Street Journal*, March 21-22, 2009, p.W10.

BOOING IS GOOD by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

The author bemoans the near-reflexive standing ovation that has devalued the gesture and lauds loud boos by the audience at the Met's postmodern extravaganza version of **Bellini's** "La Sonnambula. While boos are common in Italy, Americans spring to their feet clapping, showing a lack of true engagement on the part of the spectators.

Francesca Zambello's deliberately provocative 1992 Met production of "Lucia di Lammermoor," was booed, and Francesca said it hurt, but it at least showed the audience was involved with what they had seen and heard.

And in other positive outcomes, **Henry James's** play "Guy Domville" was roundly jeered, convincing him to turn his back on the stage and concentrate on novel writing.

See — **Terry Teachout**, "Why Not Boo?" *The Wall Street Journal*, March 21-22, 2009, p.W14.



INVESTMENT BY BUREAUCRAT by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

"529" plans are a tax-free way to save for your kid's college education. But they're "based partly on a false premise: that state bureaucrats are good at managing other people's money." Of the 3,506 options, 93% have dropped in value and a third of them by at least 40%.

Properly done, the investment would start heavy in stocks but move into cash and bonds as the student hits college. But Utah kept 65% in stock, and Maine and New Mexico had no allocation to cash.

"In some states, the asset allocation for the 16- to 18-year-olds looks as if it was designed by the 5-year-olds."

See — **Jason Zweig** (The Intelligent Investor), "Did Your College Savings Plan Blow Up on You?" *The Wall Street Journal*, March 21-22, 2009, p.B1.

COCKTAILS OF LIT & THE ARTS by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

H.L. Mencken said a Whiskey Sour "is not a viper, but a sweet singing canary, a faithful house dog, a purring cat upon a hearth rug."

Philip Marlowe "nibbles" one in a seedy bar in the opening scene of **Raymond Chandler's** *Farewell My Lovely*. Essayist **Anthony Lane** said it was an appropriate drink as **Chandler's** Los Angeles is a "whiskey-sour climate."

NY theater critic **George Jean Nathan** used it in reviewing the odd appeal of **Katharine Hepburn** in the 1942 **Philip Barry** play "Without Love." "Although she is hardly the possessor of any overpowering sex attraction, she is appetizing in the same chill way that a whiskey sour is."

Bourbon, fresh-squeezed lemon juice, sugar. In a glass of packed crushed ice, it was known circa 1900 as a Nose-Cooler. Add orange bitters, shake and strain into stemmed glass you have the vintage Buster Brown.

See — **Eric Felten** (How's Your Drink) "The Katharine Hepburn of Cocktails," *The Wall Street Journal*, March 28-29, p.W7.

BLACKBERRYING YOUR WAY TO HIGH STRESS by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Ah yes, the books that nail down what it is to be an American at a point in time. **Max Weber's** *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, (1905); **William Whyte's** *The Organization Man* (1956); **John Kenneth Galbraith's** *The Affluent Society* (1964).

And now we have NYU sociologist **Dalton Conley's** *Elsewhere, USA* where "intraividuals" live as slaves to technology desperately trying to manage multiple data streams, telecommuting and multitasking themselves into perpetual anxiety.

And along the way, he explains the income gap. The computer obliterated low-skill jobs. Any high-tech job needing a human touch was outsourced to India. Low-skill jobs left in America? Food service preparation and home health care.

And then there's mating habits. Contrary to dogma, men do not marry down; they find their own level. Low-income men end up with low-income women; high-income marry their equals.

See — **Ideas & Opinions**, "The Elsewhere Man," *Forbes*, Feb. 16, 2009, p. 22.

Future Dates for Charleston Conferences

	Preconferences and Vendor Showcase	Main Conference
2009 Conference	4 November	5-7 November
2010 Conference	3 November	4-6 November
2011 Conference	2 November	3-5 November