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Noteworthy Books-Reviews of the American Presidents Ranked by Performance, American Author Houses, Museums and Memorials, Eating Disorders: A Reference Sourcebook

Debbie Vaughn

College of Charleston, vaughnd@cofc.edu

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Noteworthy Books

Column Editor: **Deborah Vaughn** (College of Charleston) <vaughnd@cofc.edu>

The books reviewed this month reflect our diverse society. **Phillip Powell**, Library Instructor Extraordinaire, has joined us again to review Faber and Faber's *The American Presidents Ranked by Performance* and Piotrowski's *Genocide and Rescue in Wolyn: Recollections of the Ukrainian Nationalist Ethnic Cleansing Campaign Against the Poles in World War II*.

Jennie Vaughn is new to *Against the Grain*. This month, she has reviewed Biggers' *America Author Houses, Museums, Memorials, and Libraries: A State-by-State Guide* and Lemberg's *Eating Disorders: A Reference Sourcebook*. Currently the Assistant to the Vice President for College Relations at **Warren-Wilson College** in Asheville, North Carolina, Jennie has written for **Wake Forest University's** newspaper, *The Old Gold and Black*, the *Lexington Dispatch* (NC), the *Winston-Salem Journal*, and the *Rock Hill Herald*. Not only is Jennie a creatively apt journalist, she is also one of my three beloved sisters. Welcome aboard, Jenn!

Biggers, Shirley Hoover. *America Author Houses, Museums, Memorials, and Libraries. A State-by-State Guide*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland c2000. 207 pp. ISBN 0-7864-0777-8. \$39.95.

Reviewed by **Jennie Vaughn** (Warren Wilson College)
<jvaughn@warren-wilson.edu>

About a half-mile from the funky coffee shops, bookstores and vintage clothing stores that make up downtown Asheville lies Riverside Cemetery. I've lived in Asheville for nearly seven years — two of them in an upstairs apartment just blocks from the site — and never visited the grave of short story writer **William Sydney Porter**, better known as **O. Henry**. I'm embarrassed to admit that I didn't



know it was there. On the civic front I'm a pretty "with-it" person: I suffer through the typos in the local paper, keep up with what they're doing in city council, even listen to the AM country station at times to make sure I know what's going on. But sometimes you're living amidst treasures you had no idea even existed, and when you find out about them, you're fascinated and amazed. That's the fun of **Shirley Hoover Biggers'** fabulously informative book *America Author Houses, Museums, Memorials and Libraries*.

A must-have for any bibliophile, this book lists,

state-by-state and city-by-city, a huge variety of sites connected to all kinds of American authors, from **Fitzgerald** to **Faulkner**, **Hemingway** to **Joel Chandler Harris**, **Whitman** to **Laura Ingalls Wilder**. Each entry starts with a summary of visiting hours and other vital information, followed by a description of the site and its significance in the author's life. It's a great guide for travelers who want to walk in the footsteps of our country's most eloquent wordsmiths. Even for armchair voyagers it's a treat, chock full of obscure facts. Did you know that the **Lewis Grizzard Museum** is housed in a former gas station in Moreland, Ga.? (The Southern humorist spent his childhood in this town near Atlanta.) That the complete text and pictures of **Dr. Seuss's** first book, *And To Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street*, is featured in a bas relief at his national memorial in his hometown of Springfield, Michigan? Or that **Oscar Hammerstein II**, the famous playwright and lyricist, got his start at **Manhattan's Columbia University**, where he wrote and acted in several student plays? Or that the living room in the country cottage of **Dorothy Parker**, the famous wit, poet, and critic, was painted in ten shades of red? These are just a few of the off-the-wall facts you'll find in this work.

Biggers' writing isn't nearly as good as that of the authors she writes about. Her summaries are rather dry and monotonous. But her meticulous research and excellent organization make this book a winner.

Faber, Charles F. and Richard B. Faber. *The American Presidents Ranked by Performance*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2000. ISBN 0-7864-0765-4. \$45.00.

Reviewed by **Phillip Powell** (College of Charleston)
<powellp@cofc.edu>

Numerous books and articles have been written in the past rating and ranking U. S. Presidents with the efforts of **Ridings & McIver** (1997) and **Murray & Blessing** (1993) being published within the past 10 years. This reviewer was skeptical upon seeing another book earnestly ranking Presidents. Reading the introduction, though, makes apparent that **Faber & Faber** have taken a slightly different approach. Although the criteria by which each President was judged are similar to past works, the Fabers avoided the polling process often favored by the others. Rather, only they are responsible for the ranks assigned to each President, from **Washington** through **Clinton**.

Admittedly, the reviewer's skepticism continued as he began reading. Any book of this type is fraught with subjectivity, no matter how objectively the information is gathered. Concern was raised when it was learned the decisions were solely those of the


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in the first edition or the supplement, but treated in this edition, include DNA testing and genetic privacy, partial birth abortion, and the Internet and intellectual freedom. Also, the impact of the Rehnquist Court is more fully evaluated, especially as it relates to federal and state jurisdictions and the rights of criminal defendants. Most importantly, the same high quality stan-

dards that marked the first edition and the supplement, hold firm in this new edition. (The original *Encyclopedia of the American Constitution* was a Dartmouth award winner in 1987.) Contributors are mainly academicians, but there are also articles by practicing attorneys and judges. While the appendices remain the same, there are updated case, name and subject indexes.

Quality is not the issue with this set. This encyclopedia is an obvious choice,

especially for those libraries not owning the original edition, or even the 1992 supplement. But libraries owning both the first edition and the supplement will have to decide if the amount of updating warrants the \$500 price tag. Most larger academic and public libraries will want to add it. They always have the option of placing the earlier versions in circulation, or sending them to a branch. It is smaller libraries with limited budgets that have the more difficult choice. 

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qualities within the book were raised as the review process began. A comparison by party between **Faber** and **Ridings** shows the distribution to be fairly even. Differences vary by perhaps one from one quartile to the next. **Ridings** rated the Whigs poorly overall while **Faber** was split. Between the two, they both rate a majority of Republican Presidents in the lower half. This comparison was made, because each proceeded with their ratings by very different methods and arrived at similar, if not exact, results. It is possible the **Fabers** have not sacrificed objectivity for an agenda.

The first two sections lay the foundation on which the book is constructed. In the Introduction, the authors describe with examples how similar books have been compiled and how theirs is different from the others. It is Criteria and Ratings, though, which discusses the specific performance areas by which each President was judged. These areas include: foreign relations, domestic programs, administration and intergovernmental relations, leadership and decision making, and personal qualities. Each section is subdivided into 10 sub-areas. Following this is the overall assessment that results in a President's rank. The ranking process was based upon research of scholarly works (both books and journals) for which there is a bibliography. According to each criterion, a President is given a positive or negative score depending upon his performance in a given area with 20 either way being the maximum. This methodology might be perceived as faulty or subjective.

Despite some possible negative preconceptions, this is a very thoughtfully written book. The authors chose their words carefully. Their opinions are straightforward, but they are made without resorting to clichés or blanket judgements. It is plainly clear they strive to present these facts with as little bias as possible.

Following the Presidential entries are the endnotes and the bibliography. For a book of this scope, the endnotes are skimpy (59 total). On the other hand, the bibliography lists nearly 140 books and journal articles discussing the Presidents and the Presidency. This volume is recommended for researchers wishing to make informed comparisons of U. S. Presidents.

Lemberg, Raymond, ed., with Leigh Cohn. *Eating Disorders: A Reference Sourcebook*. Phoenix: Oryx Press c1999. 253pp. ISBN 1-57356-156-8. \$49.95.

Reviewed by **Jennie Vaughn** (Warren Wilson College)
<jvaughn@warren-wilson.edu>

Like an alarming number of young women, my high school and college years were marred by anorexia and bulimia. I've since become an advocate for eating disorders sufferers, working to expand my knowledge about the subject and inform a mostly clueless public about how to help people who have problems with food and body image and how to prevent these problems in the first place. In this quest, I've read every book, article and Web page I can find. Unfortunately, most of the material out there ranges in quality from mediocre to downright awful. (Maybe that's why the public is so clueless.) So when I was asked to review this book, I was pretty skeptical, expecting more of the same.

I was pleasantly surprised. This slim volume is worth its weight in gold. Composed of dozens of short yet complete articles by a variety of well-known experts, *Eating Disorders* is simple enough for a college student yet helpful and illuminating even for seasoned professionals who have treated the problem for years. It is brilliantly organized into five chapters, ranging from general symptoms and causes to medical issues and treatment approaches. Within each chapter are several articles, all comprehensive yet refreshingly clear of the confusing and obnoxious jargon so common in research writing. The writing isn't preachy, stilted, or

authors. Questions about political bias and overall scholarly

"dumbed down"; it's simply left uncluttered so you can actually understand what the authors are saying. Also, the authors treat the reader with compassion and dignity, not disdain or pity, which was a major selling point for this sensitive reader.

Too, *Eating Disorders* has all the little extras that make a reference book truly useful. For those who are unfamiliar with the literature, there is a comprehensive glossary of psychological and medical terms common in writings about eating disorders. Eating disorders are incredibly complex, and the body of research on the subject is growing every year. It is impossible to do more than scratch the surface with a 253-page book. Perhaps that's why the last sixty pages consists of a listing of more materials about the subject. This book contains one of the best bibliographies that this avid researcher has come across — one that lists not just books (though there are plenty of those) but also periodicals, videos, and even Websites. And for those who wish to find out about the topic first-hand (or for eating disorder sufferers who need a place to turn), there's a state-by-state listing of hospitals and other facilities that treat the disorder. For its bibliography alone, *Eating Disorders* is an essential addition to any library.

Piotrowski, Tadeusz, ed. *Genocide and Rescue in Wolyn: Recollections of the Ukrainian Nationalist Ethnic Cleansing Campaign Against the Poles in World War II*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2000. ISBN 0-7864-0773-5. \$45.00.

Reviewed by **Phillip Powell** (College of Charleston)
<powellp@cofc.edu>

For the past half century, the atrocities of World War II have assaulted the senses of rational, thinking, feeling human beings. Literally thousands of books have been written addressing the persecution of Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, Communists, and ethnic minorities. Piotrowski's book is, by far, the most complete accounting of murderous violence that happened to be experienced by him and his family. Also, it is one of the few books telling of this horrific episode published in English. Others available in English by **Feliks Trusiewicz** and **Mikolaj Terles** were published in 1985 and 1993, respectively. For all practical purposes, all other books on this subject are written in Polish.

The Encyclopedia of the Holocaust offers what appears to be the most complete coverage of the ethnic cleansing of Poles by members of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) in a standard reference work. "In March (1943) the UPA also embarked upon the mass murder of Poles, first in Volhynia (Wolyn) and later in Eastern Galicia. The number of victims among the Poles is estimated at forty thousand." (1531) It is good Mr. Piotrowski has stepped forward to fill in the void of what occurred. This is Piotrowski's second book recounting this sordid chapter in Polish and Ukrainian history. *His Vengeance of the Swallows* (1995) details his own family's war experiences and eventual emigration to the US. This book broadens the scope and he has taken the words of both Poles and Ukrainians who were in Wolyn (Polish) or the Ukrainian, Volhynia during the time. Wolyn was a region in southeastern Poland carved out after World War I. Ethnically, the majority of the population was Ukrainian with Poles and Jews being the largest minority groups. Each chapter is a county within Wolyn. A chapter begins with a brief geographical description followed by tables listing the county's population by language and by religious affiliation. Immediately following, Piotrowski sets the stage describing actions of the UPA. Most importantly, though, are the first-hand recollections by surviving residents of Wolyn of the actions made by the UPA toward Poles, and also, Ukrainians who were suspected of assisting Poles, within the area. The intensity of the brutality, across the book, is both consistent and mindboggling.

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contributor wrote: "Whoever did not live through this will not understand, because such things are truly difficult to understand, and more difficult still to live through." Such words give the reader a sense of what is to follow. Although it was necessary, there were moments when the reviewer thought he might have done well to skip Piotrowski's preface and allow the words of his contributors to speak solely for themselves. It is difficult to criticize the words of someone who experienced something of this magnitude. Piotrowski treads a very fine line between his own justifiable emotions and the objective reporting of events.

Piotrowski includes several appendices including one containing excerpts from documents from Poles, Germans, Ukrainians, Jews, the Soviets, and the UN. The other noted here is a chronology giving the reader some background of the political situation of the region beginning after World War I. The book concludes with copious notes, a significant bibliography and indexing.

This may be the seminal work regarding this tragic period.

Smith, Clint E. *Inevitable Partnership: Understanding Mexico-U.S. Relations*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000. 241 pp. ISBN 1-55587-873-3. \$19.95.

Reviewed by **Debbie Vaughn**
(College of Charleston) <vaughnd@cofc>


About a year ago, I was listening to **National Public Radio** when a segment aired concerning Texan farmers and Mexican illegal immigrants. Living relatively far away from the US-Mexico border, the subject of the United States' apparently easily-permeable border had never even crossed my mind. I listened intently, however, as one Texan described his farmland, which happens to lie on the countries' dividing line, and the proximity of his house to this imaginary line. He spoke of watching young Mexican mothers creep over the border in the wee hours of the morning, carrying their children to what they hoped would be a better life.

Mexican migration and its relation to US policy is only one of the issues explored by **Clint Smith** in his book *Inevitable Partnerships: Understanding Mexico-U.S. Relations*. The exodus of Mexican peoples to the United States is nothing new; since the

commencement of the twentieth century until the beginning of World War I, affluent Mexicans fled their homeland due to the horrors of the Mexican Revolution. It was not until the 1920s that United States citizens began to fear and hence disapprove of Mexican departure into the Land of Liberty.

While the subject of legal (and illegal) emigration is widely discussed among the media, there are dozens of other arenas that impact the Mexican-US relationship. In order to make an in-depth study of any two cultures, though, it is imperative to first examine such things as their geographies, their independent and mutual histories, their independent political growth, and their relationship with each other. Divided into three major sections, *Inevitable Partnerships* looks at the countries' evolving relationship from 1800-1994, contemporary issues, and the future of the Mexican-US association. Mexico's role in the global economy, environmental policy, drug trafficking, and bilateral relationship trends are addressed. Smith completes a thorough and applaudable investigation of these matters. Smith also looks beyond his own writing and suggests a number of sources for further reading. If this weren't enough, an extensive bibliography is also included.

A commendable characteristic of *Inevitable Partnerships* is its tone. The geographic relationship of Mexico to the US is often seen as strategic for Mexican citizens eyeing opportunity. When discussions of illegal immigrant "job stealing" and a bilingual language system surface in the media, Mexico tends to receive the parasite treatment. Smith, however, maintains a healthy and respectable view of Mexico and of its relationship with the United States. Smith's reciprocal approach makes *Inevitable Partnerships* a gem.

I am quite embarrassed to admit that before reviewing *Inevitable Partnerships*, I knew nothing of Mexico-US relations other than what I had heard that morning on **National Public Radio**. My national neighbor is a rich land diverse in geography, cultures, and peoples. It is important to maintain an understanding not only of the goings-on of your neighbors; it is even more consequential to discover how those goings-on impact your interrelation. *Inevitable Partnerships* educates readers about two large and equally diverse counties; it is a must-have for any academic or public library. Smith's smooth style of writing makes his book beneficial to high school library collections as well. As Smith states in his introduction, the 3,000-mile border that separates the US from its neighbor also separates the First World from the Third; this is an inevitable partnership that demands our attention. 

Adventures in Librarianship from page 48

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8. Robert J. Hevening


Experience: Five years postal carrier; three years Door and Entrance Manager

at Saturday's night club; two months Assistant Kitchen Engineer at Blacky's Cajun Kitchen. Education: MA, History, Darkmound University, with dual focus in the areas of Far Eastern musical traditions and Norwegian ...

9. Dorchester County Library FAQ

Where can I find the *Saturday Evening Post*? The library carries pre-1971 issues only, and those are available in microfiche. Though our microfiche reader is not currently functioning, we've found that holding the fiche up to a window with a magnifying glass is surprisingly comfortable!

10. Forrest Green Race Results

Saturday, post time 3:30, Evening Sun lead the pack into the finish, followed closely by Big Dimples and Burnt Rye Toast. Evening Sun paid 5 to 2, while ... 

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