

BOOK-OF-THE-MONTH CLUB
MIDSUMMER 1976

NEWS

FOR MIDSUMMER

THE BEST YEARS—

**An affectionate look, rich in
nostalgia, at an exuberant and
unique half decade, 1945-50**

Arthur Schlotz



David
McCullough's
**EYE
ON
BOOKS**

A FEW months ago the London *Times Literary Supplement* ran a letter to the editor that ended with an apology. It was signed by Thomas Keneally, the Australian novelist whose books include *A Dutiful Daughter* and *Blood Red, Sister Rose*, and in it he discussed his new novel, *Gossip from the Forest*. The book deals with the November 1918 armistice negotiations that were held in a dining car parked on a railway siding in the forest at Compiègne, France. "The characters," he wrote in the letter, "of Erzberger, Foch, Weygand and others are extensively researched." But there was one man on the scene, a German count, whom he could find little about. So he created a personality to fit the name. Keneally added that "by creating fictions about men from the past a writer can cause pain to living relatives" and then went on to apologize.

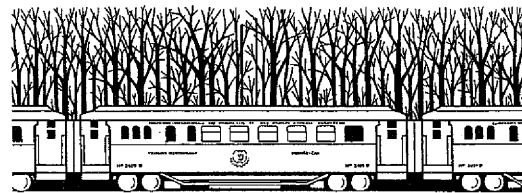
The return address on the letter was a small town in suburban Connecticut, and I contacted Keneally to talk about the novel and the apology. "As for the count," he said, "I just assumed that none of his family could have survived the Nazis, so I attributed to him some horror stories I'd been wanting to use for years. We've changed his name in the American edition." This is not the first time Keneally has fleshed out historical figures. He says that in *Blood Red, Sister Rose* Joan of Arc's tormentors are based on various Australian politicians and that he modeled Joan herself on Germaine Greer, a fellow Australian. "I wanted a gutsy, foul-mouthed girl, and where are you going to find girls like that today except in New York City or Australia?"

Keneally became interested in the 1918 armistice negotiations after a producer asked him to write a film script about the last day of World War I. In the course of doing some background research he came across the name of Matthias Erzberger, a governmental official who headed the German delegation at the talks. He promptly gave up the film script and went to work on Erzberger. "The losing side obvi-

ously sends the least argumentative spokesmen, but Erzberger kept exact records of everything he did and his wanderings from one governmental office to another looking for instructions read like Joseph K.'s in *The Trial*. Germany was on the brink of socialist revolution. The whole history of Europe could have been changed in a few days. It was a fascinating time."

The villains of the novel, though, are the French. "I'm intensely anti-French," Keneally admits. "I see Foch's behavior as just a prelude to the kind of French arrogance we've been seeing ever since. He was an ignorant, closed-minded bigot, and in World War I he and other French generals used Australians as cannon fodder while they hid behind the lines. Did you notice the dedication of *Gossip from the Forest*? It reads, 'In the season in which this book was written, the French government persisted in exploding nuclear devices above the ocean where my children swim.' The simple bloody truth is that these bastards were setting off bombs just off Australia. It would be just the same for you if they were dropping A-bombs off Cape Cod."

I asked him how long he and his family planned to stay in Connecticut. "We're here for less than a year. One reason I came over was that I thought the Australian critics were going to kill me for *Gossip*, but they loved it. One critic wrote that he felt he shouldn't like it because it wasn't sufficiently Australian, but then he decided it was time to get over that sort of nationalism. Back there, we're at the age the U.S. was in the 1890s. It's just now becoming a fit place for writers and artists. Middle-aged writers are still at work with the London critics in mind, but the younger ones write for Australians.



Being a cultural colony takes a lot longer to get over than being a political colony. Americans should know that. Canadians know it even more so.

"I think Canada is even less culturally self-confident than Australia. Canadians have been dominated by both the U.S. and England. At least we're nicely far away and buffered by Oriental societies. I don't think most people realize how strong an influence the Orient plays on Australian culture. Jakarta-Indonesian (*Continued on page 22*)

EYE ON BOOKS (Continued from page 6)

is the most popular foreign language taught in the schools.

"Most Australians, though, grow up thinking that they are only half-Australian, that they have another half in some mysterious place called Back Home, which usually means England or Ireland. That's why Australians are always traveling. The shock is to find that your whole self has really been Australian all the time, the way you tell a joke or drink booze, anything. Everything."

ON A map of Virginia, Freetown in Orange County is listed as a ruin. "There's only a chimney and a few foundations, that's all," says Edna Lewis, "but we still go back for visits, it's so beautiful." Freetown was founded by her grandparents and two other families of freed slaves. Her grandfather had been a coachman, her grandmother a brick mason. They hoped their little settlement would attract other freedmen, and for a time it did. Edna Lewis grew up there and left almost forty years ago, when she was 19. She remembers it as "a lively place, with poetry readings, singing quartets and productions of plays put on by the young people."

She also remembers the food and has written a cookbook, *The Taste of Country Cooking*, to preserve the old recipes. "My brothers and sisters and I



EDNA LEWIS

John T. Hill
are the last of the original families—and there are no children—so I wanted to get everything down before it was lost. So much of what we shared seemed to center around food, either planting it or harvesting it or eating it. The young people have moved away and learned to eat TV dinners. Last summer

when I was back in Virginia I found that people were eating a lot of cake-mix cakes and Kentucky Fried Chicken."

Her book is more than an ample collection of recipes for ham and sweet potato breakfast or sautéed veal kidneys or plum wine or fresh peach cobbler with nutmeg sauce. It is also a record of life in Freetown, of Revival Week and Race Day, wheat threshing in July and hog slaughtering in the fall (the children saved the bladders to dry and blow up like balloons for Christmas decorations).

The recipes in *The Taste of Country Cooking* are often neither fast nor simple. "Cooking," she says,

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THOMAS JEFFERSON by Fawn M. Brodie

A brilliant new view of Jefferson, emphasizing his private rather than his public life. Describes the influences upon his character of his aristocratic upbringing, of the tragic early deaths of his wife and four of their six children, of his liaison with Sally Hemings, a beautiful quadroon slave. "Sensitive, eloquent and farsighted"—Gilbert Highet.

(Pub price: \$12.50) Price to Members: \$9.75

P.E.T.: Parent Effectiveness Training

by Dr. Thomas Gordon

A clinical psychologist's on-the-job training manual for parents. Using dozens of case histories, Dr. Gordon teaches parents how to resolve conflicts between themselves and their children in a mutually satisfactory way. He also shows how to become an "active listener" who can help children find their own solutions to their particular problems. "Common sense ne'er so well expressed"—*Saturday Review*. "Makes parenthood pleasanter"—*N.Y. Times Magazine*.

(Pub price: \$10.95) Price to Members: \$8.95

JONATHAN LIVINGSTON SEAGULL

by Richard Bach

"A new and valuable citizen of that very wondrous world ruled by Saint-Exupéry's Little Prince"—Ernest K. Gann. Most gulls don't care about flying. But Jonathan Livingston Seagull loves to fly—higher, faster, farther than any other bird. Eventually, Jon's aerial experiments lead him to a delightful series of adventures which teach him many things about flying and about freedom. "A gem. . . . Along with its perfect prose are fifty magnificently imaginative full-page photographs of gulls in flight by Russell Munson"—*San Francisco Examiner*.

(Pub price: \$5.95) Price to Members: \$4.95

THE NEW OPTIONS MARKET

by Max G. Ansbacher

For more than a decade, Max Ansbacher has been trading in puts and calls, using a series of investment strategies said to have proved very successful. In this guide he tells how the puts and calls market operates, describes his own profit-making tactics and explains virtually everything else the intelligent investor needs to know to begin participating in this form of investing.

(Pub price: \$9.95) Price to Members: \$8.95

HELTER SKELTER

The True Story of the Manson Murders

by Vincent Bugliosi with Curt Gentry

In 1969, Sharon Tate, Leno LaBianca and at least five other people were brutally and arbitrarily murdered in Los Angeles. Subsequently, Charles Manson and four members of his singular "family" were convicted of the crime. In this "battle-scarred chronicle," Vincent Bugliosi, the young California district attorney who prosecuted the case, tells a story that no one else can ever tell of the pursuit and trial of the murderers.

(Pub price: \$10.00) Price to Members: \$8.95

EYE ON BOOKS (Continued from page 22)

"was weaved into the way you worked. There were always lots of hands to share the work. You cooked what was growing and you arranged what you were cooking to what other chores you had. If you had to do a lot of work outside, then you'd cook something that could simmer all day on the back of the stove. We didn't eat okra; that wasn't a local crop, and blackeyed peas were a green cover crop; we never had to plant them. We were close enough to the sea to get oysters, and we always had them for Christmas. Someone would drive the thirty miles or so over to Fredericksburg to get them, and we had lots of shad in the spring. That was about the only fish we ate. Since we killed hogs only in the fall, that's when we would have pork. We sold the pigs' feet to the meatpackers and didn't pickle them. We never had ham hocks or pork chops, since we ground the meat up to make sausage. A few years ago, when people first started to use the expression, my sister asked me what soul food was. I told her I didn't think it was what we used to eat."

Planting at Freetown was done on a lunar cycle. "We planted sweet potatoes and root crops during the dark of the moon, and vegetables that grew on the top of the ground in the light of the moon. There was a saying that if you planted watermelon during the dark the blossoms would fall off. Also, we planted white potatoes on St. Patrick's Day, but I don't think that had anything to do with the moon. I think it was because we called them Irish potatoes."

For the past five years Edna Lewis has been lecturing on African life to schoolchildren at the Museum of Natural History in New York. "I try to work in cooking demonstrations as well. The children always enjoy that. And they are always surprised that when I was young I knew people who had been slaves. They seem to find it hard to believe that there was a different world than the one they know. It must seem to them like a long time ago."

TEN years ago a Manhattan office worker named Sylvia Meagher (pronounced Marr) published an index to the twenty-six volumes of the Warren Commission report on the assassination of John Kennedy. A year later she published *Accessories After the Fact*, a hefty indictment of the commission and its findings. At first the books were largely the property of a small group of assassination enthusiasts. Later, they became recognized as key documents that both defenders and critics of the commission had to refer to and debate. The books soon went out of print and also became highly sought-after items on the secondhand book market.

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THE VIKING PROCESS by Norman Hartley

Modern technology becomes a terrifying tool in the hands of urban guerrilla terrorists more efficient—and vicious—than the PLO or the IRA. The terrorists, who call themselves the Vikings, launch a chilling terror campaign against one of the world's biggest multinational corporations. The climax will be the ultimate terrorist act, planned to occur in a huge shopping mall crowded with some 70,000 potential victims.

(Pub price: \$7.95) Price to Members: \$6.95

SWITCH BITCH by Roald Dahl

A collection of marvelous short stories for adults by the author of *Someone Like You* and *Kiss Kiss*. The four tales ("The Visitor," "Bitch," "The Great Switcheroo" and "The Last Act") offer sly commentary on bons vivants, suburban marriages, aphrodisiacs and the dangers of jilting gynecologists from Texas. "Creepy, horrible, diabolical... outrageously funny"—*Miami Herald*.

\$5.95

BIRTH WITHOUT VIOLENCE

by Frederick Leboyer

During a long professional career, Frederick Leboyer, former *chef de clinique* at the University of Paris' School of Medicine, has delivered more than 10,000 babies, the last 1000 of them "nonviolently." It is his contention that this technique, involving four simple steps, helps make the infant's transition from the womb to the world relatively trauma free and results in a contented, peaceful and ultimately more secure child. Illustrated with 40 photographs.

\$7.95

THE BANK BOOK by Morgan Irving

as audited by Charles Sopkin

In this candid and amusing behind-the-scenes account of the American banking business, Morgan Irving, an American bank vice president writing under a pseudonym, explains, among other things, why the average citizen should not use bank credit cards or maintain a regular checking account, why collateral loans should be avoided and why, in his opinion, customers should *not* let a bank manage their money. "Takes the mumbo jumbo out of banking and describes the abuses which banks inflict on consumers, taxpayers, home buyers and smaller businesses"—Ralph Nader, *Boston Globe*.

\$6.95

TWO ON A BIG OCEAN by Hal Roth

Hal Roth tells the fascinating story of how he and his wife, Margaret, circumnavigated the Pacific in their fiberglass sloop *Whisper*, a 35-foot craft not unlike those owned by thousands of weekend sailors. The Roths' 18,500-mile trip took them from California to the Gilberts, Marianas, Japan and the Aleutians before they returned home. Both a practical cruising book and an exciting story for armchair voyagers. Photographs.

(Pub price: \$8.95) Price to Members: \$7.95

EYE ON BOOKS (Continued from page 24)

The assassination is, if anything, a hotter topic than ever, and *Accessories After the Fact* has just been reissued in a large-format paperback. I dropped by Sylvia Meagher's office the other day to talk about what she and other commission critics have accomplished over the past ten years. "I think our biggest contribution has been to destroy a naive belief in all government pronouncements." She thinks it possible that the doubters of the Warren Report led the way for those who would later doubt the first official explanations of Watergate and its related scandals.

She is most proud that her charge that Oswald had left a note with the FBI and that the FBI later destroyed it has now been admitted by the government itself. "But no one in the bureau has been punished for this," she adds. "Someone destroyed evidence. What kind of an example is this?"

Unlike many other commission critics, she endorses no particular theory of how the assassination was carried out. "I have no theories," she says. "I just raise questions. I think I've proved that it was physically impossible for Oswald to have murdered the president and Officer Tippit. He just wasn't where the Warren Report says he was, and the commission itself produced evidence to prove that. But whoever did it had to have some contact with Oswald. He is the key to everything."

Too much attention, she feels, has been paid to criticism of the report by "intellectual harlots whose charges have been paranoid and unreasonable." She is especially unhappy about the effect the activities of New Orleans DA James Garrison had on the case. "He was a typical DA off on a political vendetta. I denounced him in print and said we couldn't let him get away with the same things we were attacking the Warren Commission for doing. I received a great deal of pressure from my old friends not to criticize him, from other people who didn't believe the report. We had had a great deal of camaraderie before that and shared our information. After Garrison all that was lost."

I asked her if she thought the murder of Kennedy would ever be solved, and for the first time she didn't answer immediately. Finally, she said, "No, no, I don't think it will, but we have to keep asking questions."

MEMBERS MAY ORDER ANY OF THE FOLLOWING BOOKS

GOSSIP FROM THE FOREST, Thomas Keneally, \$8.95
THE TASTE OF COUNTRY COOKING, Edna Lewis, \$10.00
ACCESSORIES AFTER THE FACT
Sylvia Meagher, \$5.95 (softcover)

HOW TO BE YOUR OWN BEST FRIEND

by Mildred Newman and Bernard Berkowitz
with Jean Owen

Two practicing psychoanalysts tell how people can and must learn to help themselves. In simple layman's terms they explain why they believe each person has both the innate ability and the power to be happy. Through a series of revealing questions and answers, they show how to assess oneself objectively and how to realize one's potential fully. "It is a book that will give you ways to create a rich life for yourself, whoever you are, wherever you now are"—Dr. Elizabeth Thorne.

\$4.95

HOW TO BE AWAKE AND ALIVE

by Mildred Newman and Bernard Berkowitz

The authors of *How to Be Your Own Best Friend* again use their psychoanalytic wisdom to help people realize more fully their goals in friendship, marriage and career. This time the two practicing psychologists tell how to overcome the unconscious fears, angers and disappointments of childhood that may keep men and women from enjoying true happiness today.

\$4.95

DRAGONS AT THE GATE

by Robert L. Duncan

A riveting tale of CIA "dirty tricks" abroad by the author of *The Q Document* and *The February Plan*. Set in Tokyo amid an atmosphere of top-level international intrigue, this novel involves a dizzying CIA plot to set up and kill one of its own secret agents. "A nifty spy thriller written with intelligence and wit"—*The Washington Post Book World*.

(Pub price: \$7.95) Price to Members: **\$6.95**

WORDS OF LOVE by Pearl S. Buck

A beautifully designed and illustrated little book of love poems written by Miss Buck but not made public during her lifetime. This first and only collection of her poetry is filled with brief but beautiful verses describing the double edge of love—its pain and its pleasure. The poems are exquisitely reproduced in the calligraphy of Jeanyee Wong and illustrated with examples of the Chinese art Miss Buck so admired.

\$4.95

MAKING THINGS GROW: A Practical Guide for the Indoor Gardener by Thalassa Cruso

This helpful guide by television's popular "plant lady" covers every aspect of indoor and window-box gardening—from how to select a healthy plant to how to keep plants flourishing even when you're away on vacation. An appendix lists more than 100 recommended plants and the growing conditions they prefer. Illustrated.

(Pub price: \$8.95) Price to Members: **\$7.95**