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The Week in BOOKS By MARTHA MacGREGOR

How do you research a travel book? "We use all kind of dodges," says Temple Fielding. "False names for reservations at restaurants and nightclubs. Sometimes we go in cold. If we think we'll be recognized, we wait for a big party and slip in behind."

"We always take the *specialite*. We're just tourists. We pretend we speak only English. My wife and I order different things. If we're doing a city in a hurry sometimes we eat two lunches or dinners. Or we have the first course in one restaurant and the second in another. Everywhere we go together" (the Fieldings travel separately, too) "we stay in different hotels, and sometimes we move two or three times in the same city."

The first "Fielding's Travel Guide to Europe" was published in 1948. Every year a revision appears, and every year, for six months, the Fieldings, Temple and his wife Nancy, and their assistants Joe and Judy Raff, take to the road. "The rest of the time we're in jail, doing the writing." Jail is home in Mallorca.

Fielding's readers see him as a knight-in-armor battling tourist traps. How do the trappers feel? "Well," Fielding admitted,

"Nancy and I do wince a little when we walk into a place we described last year as terrible, full of bedbugs, etc. It takes a lot of *chutzpah* to go back, and the reaction varies from absolute rage, 'You get out of here,' to obsequious scraping and bowing."

Many of their tips to recheck come from readers. The Fieldings get 250 to 300 letters a week in season. "Nobody will listen to anybody else's trip, but they all know we listen. Some go on for eight pages and some send in mimeographed accounts up to 100. They tell us straight: 'Hotel Ajax is a rat trap.'"

"We keep a record of all the comments. One black mark we disregard, but when they run to five or 10 or 15 the yellow light goes on. The mail is our weathervane."

The Fieldings have worked out a method of inspecting hotels. "We don't make an appointment. We just walk in. First we look at the public rooms. Then we go to the desk and identify ourselves and are shown through the hotel down to the kitchen and the power plant. We ask to see the best suites, then the ordinary suites, every class of room down to the minimum inside single. They just keep opening doors."

"We pay all our own traveling expenses and take no gifts. We either send a gift back or a check for its value."

Fielding, who did his first guide for Fort Bragg when he was a WW II second lieutenant ("where to find the laundry"), now has a paperback economy guide to Europe, too (Dell, \$1.65).



NANCY and TEMPLE FIELDING

If British reviews of "The Death of a President" have a common theme, it is "too much." Literary overkill . . . A great doorstep . . . A deluge of trivial detail ("Who cares if Manchester's middle name is Raymond?"). Even Cyril Connolly, who rather admires the book (Sunday Times), leads off by reprimanding American reporters for their "agglutinated" masses of fact.

The New Statesman (Nicholas Tomalin) quite out-Muggeridges Muggeridge: A bad book, vulgar, tasteless, pawing over people's suffering and stupidity with a servant's hall reverence for presidential power. People have turned this "arbitrary tragic event" into a "cheap wearisome bore."

The London Times finds the book "fair and judicious . . .

Mr. Manchester is no sycophant." But the 'Texas tour sounds like the progress of a Tudor monarch. "A regrettable book" (Rebecca West, Sunday Telegraph). "It tells one shocking story after another, either as if they were funny or could be taken for granted." And it shows disrespect for the President (the new President). Still, Manchester wrote in "all innocence."

And then there is Malcolm Muggeridge (Observer), who sees the whole Kennedy saga as a "telly-spectacular": camera-eyes, journalists, "Action!" with the assassination the last tragic sequence, "expertly," if tediously, recounted by Mr. Manchester. "Has any episode in human history, apart from the Crucifixion, been so lavishly described?"