

## BOOKS RECEIVED

*BIG STORY.* By Peter Braestrup. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1978. Pp. 606. \$8.95.

We won Tet. During the prolonged repulsion of the 1968 Vietcong and North Vietnamese attack, however, American news media treated the offensive as a conclusive disaster for the United States' military effort in South Vietnam. In this abridged version of his two-volume work, Peter Braestrup, veteran Vietnam correspondent and Woodrow Wilson Fellow, attempts to characterize and to explain the marked deviations from reality exhibited by American journalism dealing with Tet. His analytic tack is both quantitative and thematic. He stresses the amount of coverage allotted various news items originating in both Vietnam and Washington during Tet, and categorizes the imagery attached to them.

Braestrup attributes fault for the journalistic debacle to all sides, including the correspondents and the government. He awards the lion's share of the blame, though, to media managers too eager to "keep it simple" and too little concerned with gaining clarification of fragmented reports hastily filtered through global news organizations. Braestrup's effort is not to highlight the effects Tet reportage may have had on American politics of the time. It is to reveal, through analysis of a significant journalistic failure, the fundamental, structural inability of the American press to deal with surprising or unconventional confrontations with due regard for balance and objectivity.

*DIVORCE LAW.* By Howard L. Bass and M. L. Rein. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976. Pp. 209. \$5.95.

The combination of a staggering increase in divorce decrees and the exorbitant cost of legal advice should make this practical guide to the intricacies of marriage, divorce, and custody problems a valuable commodity. Besides answering basic legal questions, the book reveals a refreshing sensitivity to the emotional crises engulfing the troubled couple. The book does not pretend to obviate the need for professional legal advice, but does answer such basic questions as the acceptable grounds for divorce, separation, and annulment, and the necessary elements of grounds such as fraud, cruelty, and abandonment.

The authors recognize that a lawyer's recommendation of professional counseling may salvage a marriage or prevent future emotional difficulties in members of the family, particularly children. In this respect the book may be as valuable to the practitioner as it is to the layperson.

*EVERYDAY LAW MADE SIMPLE.* By Jack Last. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1978. Pp. 172. \$2.95.

This easy-to-read book provides straightforward answers to some of the ordinary legal problems encountered by the average person in the course of adult life. This newly-revised edition provides a broad but superficial discussion of current law in a variety of areas that includes contracts, torts, landlord-tenant issues, patents, wills, divorce, and mortgages. The discussions are accompanied by legal definitions and illustrative examples. Problems of any complexity, however, are beyond the scope of this book.

*INVENTING AMERICA: JEFFERSON'S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.* By Gary Wills. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1978. Pp. 398. \$10.00.

Unlike the United States Constitution, the Declaration of Independence is not a legal document, and few records remain to tell the story of its drafting and acceptance. For these reasons the Declaration is, according to Wills, constantly invoked but rarely studied. Wills has conducted a scholarly inquiry into the background and meaning of the Declaration, through what he terms "the three Declarations": the one drafted by Jefferson, an analysis of which comprises the core of the book; the one established by Congress; and the one interpreted and reshaped by the American people. Unlike other students of the subject, Wills believes that the deleted sections of the Declaration are crucial to understanding what was new and important in the document. He challenges the widely accepted assumption that the Declaration merely restates the tenets of eighteenth-century politics. The book reconstructs the familiar words of the Declaration in the context of Jefferson's world and the philosophy of his time, and provides the reader with greater insight into the meaning of this important document.

*JUDICIAL REORGANIZATION.* By Carroll Seron. Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath & Co., 1978. Pp. 175.

The author explores possible organizational reforms to meet the immediate caseload demands and opposing political pressures of the United States Bankruptcy Court. Seron examines the two alternate proposals that Congress is presently considering: (1) the rational, bureaucratic alternative, which proposes an administrative structure designed to process rather than adjudicate cases, and (2) the professionalized alternative, which would create an autonomous court structure. Seron relies on empirical data and historical factors which have shaped the Bankruptcy Court, to analyze the direction reform may take. The author stresses that there are political forces involved in court reform which might frustrate the historical pull toward the technically superior rational alter-

native. The degree to which this rational change is possible depends on the political position of key interest groups within the organization.

*MUGGING*. By Liddon R. Griffith. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1978. Pp. 212.

Violent crimes against the person have reached alarming proportions in modern society. The increasing prevalence of muggings prompted Liddon Griffith, a member of the New York City Housing Authority Police Department for over fifteen years and the holder of a black belt in jiu jitsu, to conduct extensive research on the problem. Through personal interviews with former muggers and victims, Griffith formulated several basic self-protection techniques to reduce the probability of being mugged and decrease the likelihood of serious injury if mugging does occur.

*Mugging* presents these techniques in a conversational tone, aided by demonstrative photographic illustrations, common questions and answers, and accounts of actual experiences. Griffith covers a wide range of potentially dangerous encounters, from pocketbook-snatching to armed muggings to rape. He emphasizes special techniques of self-protection for youngsters and the elderly. The book concludes with a self-evaluation that enables the reader to determine how much information he has retained. *Mugging* conveys a wealth of information which is vital to the prevention of personal injury in our society in a simple, easy-to-learn manner. In so doing, this book renders a crucially important public service.

*A PRISON AND A PRISONER*. By Susan Sheehan. Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1978. Pp. 275. \$10.95.

George Malinow refers to himself as a professional criminal, but he is more accurately termed a professional prisoner. Since 1938, he has been out of prison for only three years, which were interspersed between four felony convictions. Through Malinow's experiences, Susan Sheehan creates a vivid portrait of life inside a maximum-security prison.

At New York's Green Haven prison, Malinow (a fictitious name for purposes of the book) manages to make his life bearable by holding down an easy job, stealing and dealing in food and other contraband, and breaking rules without getting caught. In his spare time he paints pictures and writes lengthy letters to a Philippine pen-pal, whom he plans to marry upon his parole. Visits from the outside, picnics and occasional escapes and outbursts of violence punctuate the otherwise monotonous regularity of prison life. To keep order within the prison, a caste-like hierarchy of prison leaders cooperates with guards. The guards are often racist and suspicious of the "new breed" of young, black prisoners.

In 1970, New York optimistically renamed its prisons "correctional

facilities” and its guards “correctional officers.” The euphemisms have failed to change the realities. The New York prison system has failed miserably in its attempt to rehabilitate inmates. Conversely, many convicts learn the finer points of their criminal specialties in prison. Other inmates simply regard prison as the overhead in the business of crime. Perhaps the most important contribution of this book is its depiction of prison as a place in which people pay for their crimes, but are not cleansed of them.

*THE SENATE NOBODY KNOWS.* By Bernard Asbell. New York, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1978. Pp. 466. \$10.00.

A great deal has been written about the Senate as an institution, a process, and a club. Little of the literature, however, has focused on the day-to-day job of being a senator. This book is a product of the theory that the best way to learn about an institution is by watching its members—in this case, senators and their staffs—do their work and live their lives.

The author followed Senator Edmund Muskie on his daily rounds for two years, during 1975 and 1976. He describes Muskie campaigning for re-election, chairing three committees, and fighting for legislation on the Senate floor. The book gives an especially vivid account of Muskie's efforts to secure the renewal of his Clean Air Act, describing his battles with both corporation presidents and labor lobbyists. *The Senate Nobody Knows* provides an intimate view of the operation of the Senate through the experiences of one of its most powerful members.

*SILENT MISSIONS.* By Vernon A. Walters. New York, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1978. Pp. 653. \$12.95.

In this autobiography, Vernon A. Walters traces his thirty-five year career of distinguished service in the United States Army. Walters, who enlisted in 1941, possessed a talent for languages that led to his career as translator, advisor, and diplomat for five presidents. Of particular interest are his relationships with Truman, Eisenhower, and Nixon. He accompanied then Vice-President Nixon, for example, through South America when that region was highly critical of the United States.

The book is written simply and with humility. Its tone voices an American innocence that contrasts with the political calculations of the Cold War, Vietnam, and Watergate. To expect criticism of American policy from a career officer of thirty-five years, however, would be naive. The autobiography is most useful as a chronicle, seen through the uncritical eyes of a diplomat whose career has spanned a complex and trying period of American history.