

# BOOKS



## Mind's Eye, Mind's Truth

FSA Photography Reconsidered  
by James Curtis

Temple U. Press: Philadelphia

The title "Great Depression" conjures up visions of grinding poverty, hopelessness, despair. But words are limited by the extent of the imagination. A visual image says it all. That's what the Farm Security Administration thought when they set out to document life in rural America in the '30s.

*Mind's Eye, Mind's Truth* contains a sample of the work of Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, Russell Lee and Arthur Rothstein, four FSA photographers who captured images of the Okies, the migrant mothers, the Dust Bowl. Some of these photographs are national treasures. And for good reason. These FSA photographers were not mere shutter bugs, they were artists. And therein was the rub.

When Arthur Rothstein came upon a sun-bleached steer's skull in the dried-out Badlands of South Dakota, he snapped a picture. Then, in order to get a more dramatic composition, he moved the skull a few feet. Although the photo made him famous, cries of outrage for what was considered fakery threatened the survival of the FSA project.

It is the author's contention that deliberately arranging a subject was not meant to deceive but to persuade. And he makes a good case by including preliminary shots the photographer took, and then

showing how the subjects were rearranged to tell a more compelling story.

James Curtis is a professor of history and director of the Winterthur Program in Early American Culture at the University of Delaware. He explains that project director Roy Stryker was attempting to enlist the sympathies of an urban middle-class audience. Somber expressions of little children in tatters, and the play of shadows on the face of a 32-year-old mother who appears to be 50 are powerfully convincing. The New Deal needed support and, thanks to these photographs, it was on its way.

## Coming of Age in Buffalo

Youth and Authority in the  
Postwar Era

by William Graebner

Temple U. Press: Philadelphia

Being a teenager in that iconological decade called the '50s appears to have been a lark. One simply donned his/her saddle shoes and rode off to the "hop." It didn't seem necessary to think very much, only to "rock around the clock."

But, insists the author, the scene was not as serene as it appeared. American teenage society was riddled by disparate subcultures in conflict over class, race, ethnicity and gender.

William Graebner, a professor of history at the State University of New York at Fredonia, uses scrapbooks, yearbooks, oral histories, and newspaper clippings from Buffalo, N.Y., to prove his point. A photo of elitist high school girls, carefully posed, is juxtaposed against a photo of girls at a vocational school in a haphazard pose. And the differences in their styles and mannerisms are clearly defined. High school fraternities, sororities, secret societies, special "clubs," and street corner gangs set the scene for a teenage race riot in Buffalo in 1956.

A chance happening? No. Graebner believes that adults — educators, clergy and parents — were able to contain this generation with various forms of social engineering which reinforced economic and ethnic boundaries.

## The Broadway Celebrity Cookbook

Edited by A.J. Vincent  
Nautilus Books, Inc.: New York

If we are what we eat, then Phyllis Diller is potato salad, Brenda Vaccaro is meatloaf, and (we'll buy this) Sally Struthers is peach pie.

Actually that little axiom never made much sense, but it does make for some fun. And so is *The Broadway Celebrity Cookbook* which features the favorite recipes and anecdotes of 80 Broadway celebrities.

Editor A.J. Vincent, BS SCAT '80, is a Broadway personality himself. He has appeared in several off-Broadway shows and can be seen regularly on *As the World Turns*. He also loves cooking, and he was able to blend his two personas in the compilation of this book.

Somehow it's hard to believe that celebrities really do cook. Aren't they supposed to be at Elaine's or the Russian Tea Room? Nevertheless, most explain how, in the course of their hectic lives, they have acquired their special dish. And then there's Carol Burnett. Her recipe — eat out.

## The Cold War Begins In Asia

American East Asian Policy and  
the Fall of the Japanese Empire  
by Marc S. Gallicchio

Columbia U. Press: New York

Franklin Roosevelt had his hands full at Yalta with his strange WWII bedfellow Joseph Stalin. And the resulting ambiguously worded agreements, which determined the future of East Asia, were the inheritance of Harry Truman upon Roosevelt's sudden death.

What happened thereafter is the subject of *The Cold War Begins In Asia*. Author Marc Gallicchio, PhD CAS '86, who has taught at Temple and at Temple University Japan, is now an assistant professor at Northeast Missouri State University. This important study of the Cold War period evolved from his dissertation, and acknowledgements are awarded to Temple scholars Heinrichs and Weigley among others.

How did the U.S. become involved in the tumultuous post-war events in East Asia? The book contends that Japan surrendered and subsequently withdrew from East Asia before a clearcut American policy had been established. And, therefore, the U.S. stumbled into the void that was created in an effort to ward off the hosts of divergent interests who scrambled for territory and influence.

## Black Women Writing Autobiography

A Tradition Within a Tradition  
by Joanne M. Braxton

Temple U. Press: Philadelphia

Author Joanne Braxton believes that students of autobiography "are themselves vicarious autobiographers." So it can be argued that the extraordinary stories of the Black American women portrayed in the book are Braxton's story too.

Braxton explains that Black women in America "have been as invisible to the dominant culture as rain; we have been knowers, but we have not been known." Beginning with slave narratives and concluding with the formidable character of Maya Angelou, *Black Women Writing Autobiography* centers on the common concerns of family, child-rearing, the need for personal dignity and self-definition. On many of the book's pages, we meet the outraged Black mother, a woman who has learned to rely on her personal resources.

Braxton, the Cummings professor of American studies and English at the College of William and Mary, is a scholar. And this is a scholarly study of Black female autobiography as a form of symbolic memory, "a prayer sent from the heart's core."

Some of the writer/narrators, Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth, are already familiar to white and Black audiences. But others, the runaway slave Harriet Jacobs, and the poet, scholar and teacher Charlotte Forten Grimké have now taken their rightful places in the American literary experience.

*Black Women Writing Autobiography* is a celebration of Black womanhood.