What We've Learned from David Halberstam
A LETTER TO THE FRIENDS

Dear Friends of Fondren Library,

On May 20, 1950, at 8:00 p.m. the formal inaugural meeting of the Friends of Fondren Library took place in the Lecture Lounge of the library. Those present outlined two primary objectives for our organization: “to increase its own membership and to secure funds for the purchase of rare and important materials that could not otherwise be acquired by the library.” Forty-five years later the organization enjoys the extremely healthy membership of over 1300.

In addition, 1995 marks a significant milestone for the Friends of Fondren Library as our endowment now exceeds one million dollars. On behalf of the Board, I extend my thanks to each of you who has generously and consistently contributed time, talent and treasure to Fondren Library. We will celebrate this important accomplishment by presenting the library with a special gift from the Friends of Fondren on Saturday, December 2 at 9:30 a.m. in the Kyle Morrow Room in conjunction with the Homecoming festivities.

The 1995-96 academic year began in sadness with the loss of Beth Shapiro, Vice Provost and University Librarian. The members of the Board and the Friends remember Beth as a true professional and strong asset to Rice University. We are working very closely with David Minter, Interim Vice Provost and University Librarian, Libbie Shearn Moody Professor of English and Master of Jones College. The University is most fortunate to have Dr. Minter at the helm. His keen sensitivity and dedication to Fondren Library is deeply appreciated.

This is an extremely interesting and critical time for Fondren Library and for the University, itself, as the Library Planning Committee defines the parameters of the library, anticipating with vision, the demands of a new century. Aggressive technological changes, demands for space and increased operating capital, and attention to the acquisition and conservation of irreplaceable printed materials challenge all libraries today. Rice is most thoughtfully addressing these issues and all that they imply.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I wish to thank Roxanne K. Shaw for her vital leadership as President these past two years and to acknowledge departing Board members, Elaine Illig Davis, Ronald W. Blake, and Harry Gee, Jr. for their creativity, enthusiasm and significant contributions. You have an exceptional Board of Directors and I extend my thanks to each as we progress through a challenging and important year. Finally, thanks to you, each member of the Friends of Fondren, for your interest and support. Please refer to the Calendar and join us. We look forward to seeing you soon.

Cordially,

Sally K. Reynolds
President

FONDREN LIBRARY

Founded under the charter of the university dated May 18, 1891, the library was established in 1913. Its present building was dedicated November 4, 1949, and rededicated in 1969 after a substantial addition, both made possible by gifts of Ella F. Fondren, her children, and the Fondren Foundation and Trust as a tribute to Walter William Fondren. The library celebrated its half-millionth volume in 1965 and its one-millionth volume on April 22, 1979.

THE FRIENDS OF FONDREN LIBRARY

The Friends of Fondren Library was founded in 1950 as an association of library supporters interested in increasing and making better known the resources of Fondren Library at Rice University. The Friends, through members’ contributions and sponsorship of a program of memorials and honor gifts, secure gifts and bequests, and provide funds for the purchase of rare books, manuscripts, and other materials that are needed to support teaching and research at the university.

THE FLYLEAF

Founded October 1950 and published by the Friends of Fondren Library - MS - 44-F, Rice University, 6100 Main Street, Houston, Texas 77005-1892, The Flyleaf is a record of Fondren Library’s and Friends activities, and of the generosity of the library’s supporters. Beginning Fall 1995 The Flyleaf’s publication schedule will correspond to the academic calendar year.
In Memoriam: Beth Janet Shapiro

by

Barbara G. Kile

Director of Library Promotion and Public Affairs

Beth Janet Shapiro, Vice Provost and University Librarian died August 3, 1995, after a valiant battle with cancer. Beth was appointed University Librarian in 1991 and later became a lecturer in the Department of Sociology.

In January of 1991 Beth left the snow and cold of Michigan State University and rushed through the front doors of Fondren Library with her mind full of ideas about library services. As she assumed the position of University Librarian, she brought with her the energy to implement her ideas and the determination to begin turning ideas into reality.

Beth’s first priorities at Fondren Library were to develop a library mission statement and a list of goals and objectives for the library staff and the Friends of Fondren Library. She also began analyzing space options for the library. In all of these activities Beth sought the advice, interest and involvement of the Friends.

From her first days at Fondren Library and throughout her illness, Beth was an active participant in the activities of the Friends of Fondren Library. She valued and understood the importance of the external support provided by the Friends for the library.

As President Gillis said: “Beth lived a full and most fruitful life. She left an indelible mark upon the library and made hundreds of friends in the years that she was with us. We shall all miss her courage and determination.”

Beth is survived by her husband, Russell Barnes and daughter, Gabrielle Alexandra (Gabbi) Barnes.
Shapiro cont'd.

Beth earned B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. degrees in sociology from Michigan State University and an M.L.S. degree in librarianship from Western Michigan University. Before coming to Fondren Library, Beth served as Deputy Director of the Michigan State University Libraries.

She was active in a number of professional groups, including the American Association of University Professors, the American Sociological Association, the American Library Association and the Association of Research Libraries. She frequently made presentations at meetings and conferences and was the author and coauthor of many articles and books. Recently, Beth served as a director on the board of the Center for Research Libraries.

Beth’s involvement in the community was evidenced by her service on the Michigan Capitol Park Commission, the Michigan Consumers Council, and the Westside Neighborhood Association. In Houston, she served on the board of the Interracial Family Alliance.

Beth will be remembered not only for her extraordinary contributions as a professional librarian and university citizen, but also for her love of family and friends, her deep sense of social obligation, her sparkling humor, and her affirmation of life in the face of a disease that never defeated her spirit.

At her request the Shapiro Library Staff Innovation Award has been established. Contributions in her memory to this fund may be sent to the Rice University, Development Office MS 81, 6100 Main Street, Houston TX 77005-1892. The Board of the Friends of Fondren Library has made a $5,000.00 contribution to the fund. The following have also contributed:

David Bruce Anderson
 Shirley K. Baker
 Mr. and Mrs. Frank F. Banyai
 Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Baum
 Betty G. Bengston
 Don C. Benjamin, Jr., Ph.D.
 Col. and Mrs. Raymond C. Bishop
 Ethel Blackman
 Broadway Company of Sunset Blvd.
 Dr. and Mrs. Zenaido Camacho
 Mr. and Mrs. Ernest M. Charles
 Mildred L. Crocker
 Mr. and Mrs. Dean W. Currie
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 Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Marder
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 Yuriko Nakamura
 Deborah H. Nelson, Ph.D.
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 Mr. and Mrs. Jon A. Pankake
 Betty and Earl Pollock
 Linda M. D. Quaidy
 Mr. and Mrs. Arthur H. Rogers III
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 Mr. and Mrs. William H. Sparker, Jr.
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 Virginia Varteressian
 Dr. and Mrs. G. King Walters
 Wiess College
 Mr. and Mrs. Scott W. Wise
 Karin Wittenborg
 Dr. and Mrs. Richard Wolin
The New President, Profiled
by
Betty A. Conner

The Friends of Fondren Library are indeed fortunate to have Sally K. Reynolds as its incoming president. When our multi-talented leader is not tending to Friends' business, Sally is a fine arts dealer. Her extensive background in managing and developing staff, working with boards of directors, and leading and motivating volunteers gives the Friends fresh leadership and new direction.

As Executive Director of the Art League of Houston, Sally not only managed the activities of a full and part-time staff but more than doubled the membership. In addition, she planned and implemented a city-wide architectural competition to design a new League building. As a member of Christ Church Cathedral, Sally coordinated the Cathedral's $7.4 million capital campaign. Her responsibilities included managing design and production of all campaign graphics and communications, serving on the Building Committee which oversaw the completion of the project on time and within budget, and organizing and directing committees.

In Sally's current role as private art dealer, she was responsible for commissioning seven public sculptures by reviewing contracts and coordinating all aspects of the project, including foundry implementation, installation, lighting and base design. Currently, she is curator of all exhibitions for a corporate-sponsored public gallery. Sally's curatorial experience has focused primarily on creating new venues to introduce art to public areas of civic development. Since 1991, she has been the curator of the sculpture exhibitions at Allen Center Gallery, the most active corporate-sponsored space dedicated solely to sculpture in the United States.

Sally also has brought her leadership skills to bear on such diverse groups as the Houston Chamber of Commerce, Cultural Arts Council of Houston, University of Houston School of Music, YWCA, The Women's Fund and the Houston Symphony League. A member of the Board of Friends of Fondren Library since 1992, Sally assumed responsibility for the 1994 Gala which raised $80,000.00 for the Friends' endowment. She is eager to take on the challenge of guiding the Friends through a new phase of growth as Fondren Library fashions its response to the demands of the next century.
Rice Historical Society Launched  
by  
Karen Hess Rogers

On a rainy Sunday afternoon in July the Rice Historical Society celebrated its commencement with a champagne reception at Autry House. This event, attended by more than one hundred charter members, honored the family of William Marsh Rice. Rice President Malcolm Gillis spoke, welcoming the twenty-plus members of the Rice family and praising the broad vision of the founder of the university.

The mission of the Rice Historical Society, simply stated, is to preserve for the future the history of Rice University. The activities of the society include conducting extensive interviews with alumni and faculty, indexing and conservation work in the Woodson Research Center (special collections) in Fondren Library, lectures, seminars, field trips and numerous social occasions.

The Historical Society has its origins in a group of dedicated volunteers who, twenty years ago, began the task of preserving Rice's past. Ray Watkin Hoagland, Malcolm Lovett, Katherine Fischer Drew, Willoughby Williams and others formed the Rice Historical Commission which collected memorabilia pertaining to Rice history. Since that time the collection of interviews, scrapbooks, photographs, uniforms, costumes, artifacts and the like has grown into a sizeable mass.

The new Rice Historical Society is a support organization much like the Friends of Fondren Library. Most of the work is done by volunteers including the fifteen-member board of directors and other interested members. Alumni and friends of Rice are welcome. Charter memberships, starting at $25, are available throughout the first year.

On October 10, Dr. John Boles delivered to fifty-five members and guests a lecture on "Highlights of Rice History" which was followed by a reception in the foyer of Sewall Hall. A November 16 reception took place in the Founders’ Room in Lovett Hall. At that time, Kathryn Costello, Vice President of University Advancement, presented pages for the society's distinguished visitors guest book to Rice deans and vice presidents. During Homecoming on December first, second and third, a concentrated effort will be made to interview alumni visiting from out-of-town. Spring activities include a lecture in the Physics Amphitheater, a ranch trip to Chappell Hill and a summer conference in July.

For more information, call the Rice Alumni Office at 527-4057 or 1-800-CALL ALU(M).
Some journalists don’t know when to quit. Give them an answer and they squint, shift into low gear, and drive straight through the heart of your reply.

Early in their careers these men have learned a critical lesson, a lesson that informs everything that comes after: at an official briefing the “truth” is nearly always a combination of what’s being said and what’s being hidden.

And because it is filtered through the limitations and objectives of people just as ordinary as ourselves, it is also, in varying degrees, yesterday’s hangover, the lover who let you go, a dispatch from the main office, too much salt on your potatoes, and a bad bottle of wine. It is the pressure of life running undetected beneath the river of official prose.

In the news world a good reporter knows how to take what he hears at a 9 a.m. briefing and compare it to what he hears at 5 p.m. on the street. If he’s very good he will treat the briefing as rumor and the rumor as unproven fact—if only to counter the weight of presumption that inevitably favors the spokesman.

In Vietnam David Halberstam became very good at his work, so good that when he left the Pulitzer with him. And so cussedly stubborn, aggravating, controversial, and impatient that he ruptured, perhaps permanently, the tacit agreement by which presidents had run their foreign policy and their relations with the press ever since Truman left office: in a nuclear world the stakes are too high to entertain questions. Leave everything to me.

Those are soothing words, so soothing that it can be a hard thing to break through the trance they induce. Unfortunately, as John Adams once observed on the verge of another war elsewhere—“Facts are stubborn things.” In the five year period that preceded David Halberstam’s arrival in Vietnam, the United States government spent one billion dollars on military and economic assistance in South Vietnam. By the time America pulled out in 1975, we had spent one hundred and fifty billion dollars, lost 60,000 men, alienated a generation, and lost the war.

Still, for a long time, a very long time, the official line had remained optimistic. “Why don’t you get on the team?” Malcolm Browne, the head of the AP office in Saigon, was asked when he raised questions about the war’s progress. In this instance, being on the team apparently meant surrendering the right to ask questions.

It is a timely coincidence that Fondren Library should have secured David Halberstam as its second speaker in a series intended to honor high impact writers for the work they do well. Timely because the painful fascination that pulls us back to Southeast Asia shows every sign of renewing its cycle. A recent entry in the Vietnam literature, *A Once and Distant War* by William Prochnau, takes as its subject the young men who reported the war in the early years of the Kennedy administration. It is selling briskly to a generation for whom the nomenclature of the Mekong Delta is as familiar as the landmarks on a campus map.

In this group of brash and talented reporters, no one stood taller than David Halberstam, a man whose volcanic energy and sheer will once led the young president back home to pound his desk in a fury: “Why can I get this stuff from Halberstam when I can’t get it from my own people?” he shouted at his advisers as the war went south in spite of the money, the men, and the machines that had been so dearly invested with no sign of a return. As much as he disliked Halberstam—enough to try to get him fired—in the end Kennedy read Halberstam’s stories before he read Ambassador Nolting’s dispatches out of Saigon.

In Saigon the thing was to keep up the front. When the facts refused to support it the State Department and the military did. “I am an optimist, and I am not going to allow my staff to be pessimistic,” Paul Harkins announced when he arrived in South Vietnam to take charge of the war in 1962.
Halberstam cont’d.

Unfortunately, since the facts remained singularly dreary, since reality refused to "lighten up," the idea took hold—if we can't change the way things get done there's still a chance we can change the way things get written. Hence the message that went out to the Saigon reporters: "Get on the team."

It was too late. After months of frustrating news management from the top, Halberstam, Browne, Neil Sheehan, Horst Fass, and Peter Arnett had formed their own team in the field. Their goal was to report what they saw: a populace disgusted with its own rulers, South Vietnamese soldiers unwilling to fight, disenchanted American advisers, disgruntled Buddhists, and Communist gains in the delta.

"A human lie detector," James Reston would say later of the young reporter he had coached and counseled in Washington. A lie detector that ran on adrenaline and beer, cigarettes at dawn, helicopter fuel, solitary drives, shared phones, underground contacts, and the disappointment of dead-end leads. "Halberstam's War" they called it at the Pentagon. And in a way it was—a reporter's war, a race to corner the facts and deliver them raw, when to do so meant resisting the pressure to clean them up for consumption at home.

From our present perspective, a perspective that allows even the most hawkish among us to admit that Vietnam had all the elements of a tragic mistake, it is easy to discount the courage of these early voices that pressed for a full disclosure of the political realities in Saigon and the military realities outside the city. They were speaking a language that no one wanted to hear. As is so often the case when the message is unbearably painful, the messenger is made to pay the price. Patriotism became the litmus test for reporters: whose side were they on anyway?

The answer is that the best reporters in Vietnam were on the side of their jobs. The press is no stranger to adversaries who have the power to dwarf them. One has only to think of Ida Tarbell and her protracted struggle with Standard Oil or Lincoln Steffens and his battle with the municipal machine. Still, it's another thing to question the wisdom of the federal government in wartime and perhaps equally treacherous to say "this is war" when the public back home is being told that it's not. Of all the ironies visited on the American press corps in Saigon, the most telling was the fiction that the Vietnamese were fighting this war by themselves—and winning. What the reporters saw in the field was the spectacle of American "advisers" doing ARVN's job with their hands tied, so that everyone was losing.

"We 'muckraked' not because we hated our world but because we loved it," Ray Stannard Baker once observed looking back on a life devoted to the exposure of wrongdoing. Time has softened the response to America's press corps in Vietnam, making them look more like the first generation of muckrakers—concerned citizens with a big conscience and the courage to boot. In a more forgiving season they have come to enjoy the celebrity status of whistle-blowers, the first to expose a tragic policy that tried to keep this country simultaneously committed and disengaged in an area where the stakes were said to be critically high.

More than a legacy, the Saigon press corps has created its own legend—the cold warriors of the Kennedy years, wised up, angry, and painfully disenchanted themselves, telling a story that no one wanted to hear. When David Halberstam came to speak to us at Rice I was ready to listen.
Who We Are
American Then and Now: Post-War to the Next Century
An Address by David Halberstam

On October 1 the Friends of Fondren Library sponsored an address by the legendary American journalist, David Halberstam. This event marked the second lecture in a series initiated last year by the respected historian and Librarian of Congress Emeritus, Daniel Boorstin. Mr. Halberstam's theme--America's role in a world of shifting realities--and his reputation for boldness drew an interested crowd. After a greeting by the Friends' President, Sally Reynolds, Mr. Halberstam was introduced to the audience by Dr. Alan Matusow, William Gaines Twyman Professor of History at Rice and a specialist in post-war American history.

Taking note of the sweep of Mr. Halberstam's work, particularly his distinguished trilogy The Best and the Brightest, The Powers that Be, and The Reckoning, combined with a late entry, The Fifties, Dr. Matusow remarked that Mr. Halberstam's work constitutes "a history of the last generation." Posing the question himself, he wondered aloud as to the distinction between Mr. Halberstam's work and that of his own professional colleagues. "Rock solid in its research, broad in its scope, and bold in its interpretation, there remains only one discernible difference: People read David Halberstam."

No stranger to the best-seller lists, David Halberstam has reached a wide audience over a career that has spanned four decades. But nowhere has his influence been felt more keenly than in the ranks to which he belongs. In Bob Woodward's words, "He was the journalistic father to a generation of us who went into the profession because of what he did in Vietnam."

What follows is a summary of Mr. Halberstam's remarks, delivered in a good-humored bass voice that age has done nothing to mellow.

A Nation Adrift?

As the son of one physician and the brother of another, Mr. Halberstam seems inclined toward diagnosis and in this sense it was not surprising to find him choosing the metaphor of illness and anxiety to explain the current mood of the country.

"We feel," he proposed at the outset, "as though we are a nation adrift." And though this perception may or may not reflect our reality, Mr. Halberstam, like any good physician, takes careful note of the symptoms. "The very fact that we feel this sense of malaise and unhappiness, he observed, "is probably as good as being adrift."

It seems in fact that we have merely traded one form of anxiety for another and that our post-Soviet reality has left us feeling even more imperiled than the old shoe-banging, bullying behavior of Khrushchev and his successors. Could it be that the cure--the successful containment of the Soviet threat--has left us longing for the iconography of our disease?

It would seem, Mr. Halberstam argued, that in winning the Cold War, we lost the enemy who helped define our national psyche. As a consequence "our sense of who we are is momentarily suspended" and we find ourselves struggling to fashion a shared purpose out of the remnants of a bipolar world.

An Economy in Transition

We have only to add one more critical factor to this equation of doubt, Mr. Halberstam suggests, in order to see how far we have drifted from the quaint certainties of the fifties: an economy that takes its cues elsewhere, diminishing the reach of our traditional power centers, Washington, New York, and Detroit. Today we live in an era of interdependent economies, where the defeated enemies of the last world war have now taken the lead in technology and industrial output.

The old bread and butter blue collar jobs have gone overseas. Or they have been turned over to robots. "Just a job" now requires a string of credentials as education has replaced physical
stamina as the one indispensable requirement for getting your foot in the door. Even with two educated parents bringing home the income that used to be brought home by one, there is a profound sense of economic dislocation, the belief that in many respects we live less well than our parents, and that our children will never know the meaning of prosperity.

Politics: A Study in Failure?

Insecurity breeds scapegoats and Mr. Halberstam was not long in coming to his analysis of our current fixation on inept political leadership. Somewhat in the manner of the old prophets he warned against our tendency to demonize a system in which we have also conspired or, at the other extreme, to blame individuals for problems that originate in an historic imbalance. With regard to the latter he suggested that technology has created a world in which a positive response can be generated in a matter of seconds, while the old political systems founder on the time-consuming tasks of achieving consensus. It is no wonder, he observed, that we turn to apolitical outsiders like Colin Powell, who combine the military heroics of Eisenhower with the technical expertise of the Pentagon.

What this “restless electorate” is apparently no longer willing to do is to trust the end products of their own political system. Gone are the days when a President can rule by the deference that is paid to his office—because the deference itself has been withdrawn and vested in other places. And yet isn’t it true, Mr. Halberstam asked, that we resent the weakened and wounded presidents we have in large measure created? Taking issue with the complaint that we are “badly governed,” he observed that we might in fact be governed “pretty much as to who we are with all our conflicts, and ambiguities, and diversity.” By way of example, he remarked wryly, “We all seem to want less government at the same time we want government to do more for us.”

The Cycle of History

To rightly understand our present condition, he urged his audience, we must first understand our immediate past: the unparalleled prosperity that Americans enjoyed in the aftermath of the Second World War—a war to which we committed enormous resources without incurring the destructive costs borne by Western Europe and Japan. With our enemies and allies in ashes, we returned to the business of life in a landscape unravaged by war. “We were rich in a poor world,” a role that breeds in time a peculiar sense of entitlement.

Today others are richer and we are not so rich as we were. The days of our industrial ascendency are at least temporarily behind us. In the meantime our world is riddled with poverty, unstable third world governments, and a loss of purpose at home. The things that were once easy—to govern, to prosper, and to know our own moral purpose—have suddenly become difficult and deceptive. We are angry, we are irritable and we are in a mood to turn hostile and combative.

If David Halberstam didn’t resolve the much vexed issue of who we are in these last years of a turbulent century, he certainly gave us the reassurance every patient yearns to hear from his physician: “I know how you feel.”

___E.C.
Afterwords
In Which the author Meets The Author and All is Resolved

I knew I was going to have fun with David Halberstam when I discovered that he had graduated in the bottom third of his class at Harvard College—a fact he routinely celebrates in the commencement season by owning up to it before he delivers an address. There is a message here for the best and the brightest: in due time the least and the lowest will take their revenge.

It was a kind fate that arranged to have me pick up this very famous man on his recent visit to Houston. I knew, though he didn’t, that we belonged to a secret fraternity of under-achievers. Although it may seem a small thing to others, this minor compliment led me to ponder whether I shouldn’t identify myself as a rising member of “the bottom fifth” at the outset. In the end, it was only by exercising the most severe forms of restraint that I was able to save myself from sharing this perverse point of pride with a stranger.

The truth is that David Halberstam and I began our adult lives in the same place. While my institution of lower learning was located a mere ten miles west of his, I had enough bad dates in Cambridge to speak knowledgeably of Elsie’s, the Hofbrau, the Pudding, the Charles, the Porcellian, and the Fly for the rest of my life. If I included that cunning little theater on Brattle Street that has been rerunning The Maltese Falcon since the day God was born, there would certainly be no shortage of conversation between us. Moreover I had brought up the rear of my own class in the late sixties with the kind of insouciant style that made things easy for Hillary Rodham. In a curious way I suspected that David Halberstam and I were soul-mates. We were the damaged products of a New England education who consoled ourselves by writing about history so that we might then apply the lessons of a long perspective to the issue of our premature encounter with defeat. Where!

That we should meet after all these years of separation seemed not only just but inevitable. As I turned my car onto the ramp at Hobby Airport, I reflected on the probable pleasures that lay in store for me that day. I was going to have lunch with a man whose work I greatly admired. A passing acquaintance with the literature of previous interviews suggested that he was witty, urbane, informed, and a stylist of consummate precision. The photograph on the dust jacket of his latest book said it all: David Halberstam was a great-looking guy, tall, handsome, older (than me at any rate), and thoughtful. Mmmm....

Since our slow start in college gave us a common point of pain, there was only one unresolved detail that caused me any concern. Why had David Halberstam gone on to become a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist while I had gone on to become an unemployed housewife? Not that I particularly minded being an unemployed housewife, but still there is that very slight stigma that makes it difficult to go out in public without wearing a paper bag over your head. I decided that I would not tell David Halberstam that I was an unemployed housewife on the theory that he might jump out of my car and everyone would blame me if we had to cancel his lecture. Far wiser
Halberstam cont'd.

to keep that little nugget of information to myself for the time being and spring it on him after the talk. Still, as I approached that point on the freeway where you have to decide whether you are going to take 59 and get off at Richmond or take 45 and get off at Memorial Drive/Houston Avenue, I was suddenly struck by the aptness of Robert Frost's famous image: "Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, I took the one less traveled by and that has made all the difference."

Since almost everyone would agree that there are more unemployed housewives in this world than Pulitzer Prize winning journalists, it was clear to me that when we reached the same point in the woods David Halberstam had taken the road less travelled by, while I, like a patient and unimaginative cow, had taken the familiar path and that had made all the difference. But why?

After much meandering in search of an adequate lunch spot (a detail I forgot to nail down in advance), we settled in for a visit. It was a pleasure to learn that in spite of his subsequent fame and success David Halberstam was not a man to turn his back on his roots. It would be easy at this stage of his life to put on the airs of a valedictorian, to seek to impress us with his credentials, to send his food back to the kitchen, or to complain about the temperature of the restaurant. In fact David Halberstam did none of these things. Instead we talked about baseball and the pleasures of spending a summer on Nantucket while he gamely tucked away a shrimp salad without once commenting on its mediocrity.

After lunch I entrusted the man of the hour to my husband while I went home to take a richly deserved nap. In spite of the fact that "Sunday afternoon" and "nap" have long since fused in my head I found myself sufficiently disturbed by the morning's events to throw back the covers and begin pacing the room. "Two roads diverged in a yellow woods. I took the one..." I couldn't get the words out of my mind. Was it fate, historical determinism, my pre-feminist adolescence, or the recollection of my Princeton educated father intoning "two years of college is all any woman needs" that accounted for my marginal existence on the fringes of professional despair.

My college-age daughter is taking a very tough course in statistics and at this point I decided it would be a good idea to phone her for some advice. It has always struck me as nothing short of extraordinary that long after our children have left us, we can recapture their likenesses in an instant. By now it was half past two. I saw her clad in boxers and her brother's old T-shirt, still in the sack, a can of Diet Coke on the night stand, the Cliff's Notes to Jane Eyre at the foot of the bed, her teddy bear snoozing atop a week's worth of laundry.

"Darling."
"This is a nightmare. It's you."
"Sorry, I need you to run some numbers for me."
"Shoot."
"If two people are standing at the same point in a yellow wood, what are the chances of one of them making a wrong turn?"
"With your sense of direction?"
"What makes you think I'm talking about myself?"

"It's what I told you before. You're terminally narcissistic."
"I asked you for numbers, not psychoanalysis."

"All right. But I'll have to get back to you. Give me the info and let me run it by the class."

I gave her the rundown on me, David, our sorry beginnings, our shared interest in writing and history—the works. It's true what they say; once you turn a problem over to someone who loves you the sense of relief is profound. I went
back to bed and woke up feeling refreshed just in time to make David Halberstam’s lecture.

The next day she called me back with the news.

“We discussed the situation this morning in my statistics class. Using the N to the power of c R=N1/R! (N-R)! rule we reached a consensus in less than five minutes. Your chances of becoming a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist were nil. His chances of becoming an unemployed housewife were nil. It was a wash and there’s nothing either one of you could have done to change the outcome. Since we finished that off in a hurry, we decided to go on to your other issue.”

“What other issue?”

“You know.”

“Do I?”

“There’s no need to be coy, Mother. I’ve seen you in tears.”

“One thing I have never been is jealous of another woman.”

“Ha!” She dropped the phone in disbelief.

“Look,” she said, “I don’t have all day to help you work through your issues. It was the collective judgment of the class that the chances of Hillary graduating at the top of your class and you graduating at the bottom were twenty to one, based on the spread in your I.Q. scores and the way you daydream in class. You were a long shot for First Lady because of Dad.”

“Your father’s a fine man.”

“Hel-lo? Does the word charisma mean anything to you people?”

“So we’re not the golden couple. We believe in family values and that counts for alot.”

“Right! Listen, out of the kindness of our hearts we agreed to run one more set of numbers for you—but you owe me big-time.”

“Shoot.”

“After matching the paired data with the random variables we decided that the odds against your retrieving David Halberstam from the airport successfully and returning him to Rice University on time and unharmed were three million to one.”

“Really darling?”

“I’m afraid so.”

“Eureka!” I dropped the phone and, stopping just long enough to high-five myself in the mirror, ran to the car. At forty-eight I had finally broken the odds. Moreover I had acquired a new internal compass that would save me from all the tragic mistakes of the past. Today when I bought my lottery tickets I would bear right instead of left and surely “somewhere ages and ages hence” I could say, with Frost, that one turn “made all the difference.”

___EC

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Bill Barnett and David Halberstam visit after Mr. Halberstam’s remarks.

Elizabeth Kidd, chairman of the Halberstam lecture, enjoys a convivial moment with Dick and Mary Ellen Wilson.
What’s New is Used
In a World of Big-Volume Chains Secondhand Bookstores Foster Diversity

Bookmakers at the West Houston race tracks aren’t the only ones struggling against tough odds. The book makers at small publishing houses face challenges as well. As proliferating discount bookstores focus on high-volume best, small publishing houses and their outlets, specialty book shops, are finding it difficult to compete. Large publishing houses, less willing to gamble on unknown authors or to service a population of readers with diverse literary interests, are funneling us down an ever narrowing intellectual passageway.

Ideally this shift should open opportunities for the small publisher; the situation, however, is more complex than it seems. Many of these small-edition publishers have lost their share of the market in large bookstores and now face the loss of their major clients — the small bookstores that traditionally carry a wide spectrum of works in the humanities, in history, the social sciences, poetry and the arts.

These small bookstores must compete, not only with big-volume dealers for buyers, but also with jewelers and other shopkeepers for good retail space, adequate parking and a location convenient for buyers with discretionary income. Independent bookstores accounted for 33 percent of market share in 1991. The 1994 Consumer Research Study of Book Publishing now puts the figure at 19 percent. (Christian Science Monitor, August 14, 1995) “In financial terms, the struggle between independents and chains is a ‘battlefield,’” according to the president of the American Booksellers Association. While the shelves at the large, chain bookstores overflow with how-to, bare-all celebrity books, and popular fiction, small presses and small book dealers struggle to provide the broad selection of works that nourish the spirit and intellect of a community.
In a much different vein, auctions and estate sales provide most of first editions and rare books one finds at DETERING BOOKS, A BOOK BUYERS SHOP, and THE BOOK COLLECTOR. Rare books include those with stunning bindings inlaid with multi-colored leathers and hand-painted ivory miniatures; folios of architectural engravings, hand-colored maps, flora and fauna limited-editions and museum quality, one-of-a-kind literary artifacts.

These dealers tend to be as diverse as their wares. One bookdealer, who sold jewelry before opening his first used-book store, likes to say he was “tired of selling people things they really didn’t need, at prices they couldn’t afford ...on credit.” The librarian who yearned for a less restrictive ambiance opened a shop where book lovers could have a cup of coffee and discuss their latest interests. Some book lovers become used-book dealers in desperation, when literary tastes and collections change over the years. More than one librivore became a dealer to support his “habit”.

Some are passionate as environmentalists, guilt-ridden when they fail to protect or preserve some special bit of literary heritage. A handsome, leather-bound collection of Arthur Conan Doyle caught the eye of a dealer assessing books at an

For students, HALF PRICED BOOKS in the West University Village, run by Terry Bateson, offers savings for those who don’t need the most recent edition of a textbook or one in pristine condition. Part of a national chain, HPB has five outlets in Houston each catering to a slightly different customer. Established in Dallas in 1972 by Ken Gjemre, this chain often buys books by the pound and has on occasion sold them by the yard to decorators. In addition to recycling books, large used-book dealers purchase “remainders” from publishing houses and the warehouses that serve as their distribution centers.
estate sale. A purchase price was offered and rejected. Several years later, he received a phone call accepting his original offer. The dealer arrived to find the books had been stored in a garage where Houston’s heat, humidity and voracious insects had taken a heavy toll. Disappointed and angry, the bookdealer struggled to maintain his civility. The collection was worth scarcely a tenth of the original offer.

Graham’s concern about the death of used-bookstores may be premature, but the dumbing down syndrome is real and one that should concern all of us. And although we probably don’t question the premise that the works of great writers can inspire and entertain us, we may be overlooking our own role in promoting the health of independent book makers and dealers provide. These small book makers and dealers, which protect the broad spectrum of ideas that nurture our civilization, may not survive without our active support. Voltaire referred to Shakespeare as an amiable barbarian, while reluctantly admitting that there were “passages which exalt the imagination and penetrate the heart.” It is our responsibility to see that neither the amiable barbarian nor the unknown poet gets lost in the publishing welter that now passes for literature.

_T. Anderson

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CALENDAR

1995 - 1996

Sunday, October 1 DAVID HALBERSTAM. Stude Concert Hall, Alice Pratt Brown Hall, 5:00 p.m.

Saturday, December 2 HOMECOMING AWARDS CEREMONY honoring John Baird and Orville D. Gaither. Cosponsored with the Rice Engineering Alumni. Lovett Lounge, Fondren Library, 9:30 a.m.

Wednesday, January 31 RICE AUTHORS honoring faculty, staff, alumni, and members of the Friends who had books published in 1995. Grand Hall, Rice Memorial Center, 7:30 p.m.

Friday, February 2 MEMBERS' PREVIEW BOOK SALE Grand Hall, Rice Memorial Center, 6:00 p.m.

Saturday, February 3 BOOK SALE Grand Hall, Rice Memorial Center, 9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Sunday, February 4 BOOK SALE Grand Hall, Rice Memorial Center, 12:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, February 25 SCHUBERTIAD A musical event in the style of the nineteenth century featuring performances by students of the Shepherd School of Music. Lillian H. Duncan Recital Hall, Alice Pratt Brown Hall, 3:00 p.m.

Saturday, April 20 FONDREN SATURDAY NIGHT XVI honoring Harris Masterson III. Cocktails and dinner to benefit the Friends of Fondren Endowment Fund, Cohen House, 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday, May 22 ANNUAL MEETING Cohen House, 6:30 p.m. Program to be announced.


News and Notes....

• Friends to Honor Authors on January 31, 1996
  The Friends of Fondren will honor members of the Friends, Rice faculty, staff, and alumni who had books published in 1995. Information can be sent to the Friends' office.
  Rice University
  Friends of Fondren Library MS 44-F
  6100 Main Street
  Houston TX 77005-1892

• Friends to Hold Book Sale The Friends' book sale will be held on February 3 and 4, 1996. The members' preview will be held on Friday, February 2. Books may be delivered to Detering Book Gallery, 2311 Bissonnet, or Star Motors, 7000 Old Katy Rd. Porters are available at Star Motors to help unload cars.
Friends of Fondren Library

June 1, 1995 - September 1, 1995

We welcome the following new members.

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Jennifer D. Montgomery
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Amy B. Sauers
Robert C. Spruill
Mr. and Mrs. Richard Thomas
Allison Tilly
Elizabeth Zertuche

In addition, the following have upgraded their membership in the Friends.

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The Friends of Fondren Library is most grateful to these new Friends for their interest and to the Friends of longer standing for their support and for renewing their commitments.

June 1, 1995 - September 30, 1995

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James K. Hopkins
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