Book reviews

Ancestral sketch isn't limited to 'The Scotch'

THE SCOTCH. Second edition. By John Kenneth Galbraith (Houghton Mifflin Co., $14.95).

By DONALD J. STERLING JR.
of The Oregonian staff

Sweet are the uses of perversity.

While John Kenneth Galbraith, the economist, was serving as President Kennedy's ambassador to India, he could be seen writing busily while attending public speeches. The speakers may have thought he was taking notes. In fact, as what he describes as an antidote to tedium, he was setting down recollections of the farming people among whom he spent his boyhood on the northern, or Canadian, shore of Lake Erie.

The Galbraiths and practically all of their neighbors were Scotch. Not Scots, as modern usage in Britain would have it, but in their own word Scotch. At the time of which Galbraith was writing, around World War I, they were second- and third-generation descendants of men and women who had been driven out of the Highlands by poverty and greedy landlords, and had established a self-sufficient community at a place where Canada and the United States meet.

Galbraith can be a funny man, as he is well aware. In places, "The Scotch" consists of a string of epigrams.

For example, he says of his fellow Scotch: "It was evident at a glance that they were made to last. Their faces and hands were covered not with a pink or white film but a heavy red parchment designed to give protection in extremes of climate for a lifetime."

It is true, he confirms, what they say about Scotch frugality. "Two techniques for accumulating assets have always been in some measure in competition. One is to earn money; the other is to avoid spending it. Our neighbors enthusiastically employed both."

Some of the Scotch drank; the rest didn't. The drinking Scotch also were and ipso facto the fighting Scotch. Galbraith devotes two pages to a recollection of a battle that broke out in the bar of the McIntyre House, a hotel, at the end of a day of Caledonian games.

"Some forty or fifty clansmen, the drinking Scotch at nearly their maximum effective strength, had been reinforced by elements of a Scottish regiment which had come to grace the celebration and provide music. .... And at intervals, over the spiel of the pipes, came the high demoniac shrieks which for a

JOHN KENNETH GALBRAITH
Economist recalls his boyhood

thousand years on ten thousand battlefields has [sic] struck terror to the hearts of the brave. It is the cry of uncontrollable joy of a drunken Highlander as he rushes toward personal immolation."

But Galbraith has done far more than simply cartoon his ancestors. This is a loving, understanding and detailed sketch of a community of hard-working, self-respecting, moderately prosperous farmers in harmony with the year-round rhythms of the soil.

Galbraith was a boy in the days of the horse and buggy, the one-room school, the wood stove, the steam train that might not stop at the nearest crossroad but whose rails could lead on to anywhere. He writes that he was surprised, but it is not surprising, that after the book first appeared in 1965 he received "numerous letters from across the United States and Canada from persons who had grown up in other farm communities with a strong ethnic orientation — Germans, Norwegians, Swedes. I had, they all said, described *their* early lives and surroundings."

For the second edition, Galbraith has added a second introduction and a new afterword. They are not sufficient to cause anyone with a modicum of Scotch thrift who has invested in the first edition to spend good money on another. But for those to whom "The Scotch" is new, it can be recommended as a prudent investment in a couple of evenings of warm entertainment and of reassuring information about the agricultural roots from which most of us come.

Hank Stram's autobiography worth the dance

THEY'RE PLAYING MY GAME. By Hank Stram with Lou Sahadi (Morrow, $14.95).

By ROGER GREGORY
Special writer, The Oregonian

Hank Stram's game is football. Throughout a 40-year career as a college and professional coach and then as broadcast analyst, it has not managed to dampen his sense of humor, as has been the fate of so many other coaches.

Like the late Vince Lombardi, Stram shared an equally powerful passion for victory and the repetitive preparation behind the scenes. "You have to dance every dance," he once told one of his players when they wearied of the incessant emphasis on fundamentals and drilling.

This combination of labor and light-heartedness is skillfully brought together in Stram's autobiography. He tells of his first meeting with Lombardi and how "running the ball was a religion with him." Or how, as an assistant coach at Notre Dame, he disguised a scout as a roofing worker to spy on Purdue. And in an incredible coincidence, how a Kansas City fan managed to obtain a rival's new plays by swiping a restaurant place mat the quarterback had doodled them on.

Yet amid the anecdotes, Stram manages to dispense bits of football savvy gleaned from his long career. He wryly confesses to being "preoccupied with the leeward side of an offensive line" to predict how the next play will be run. Or how he made his teams practice *all* aspects of the game, even drills in falling on a fumble.

Stram describes his coaching philosophy in the old American Football League in its infant days, trying to rival the well-established NFL, as pragmatic: "We weren't out to revolutionize anything. Football coaches are, by necessity, pragmatists first. ... Everything we did was predicated on only one thing: Will it help us win?"

Stram was a revolutionary, though, in terms of the formations and different ideas he introduced to pro football: the moving pocket, the double tight end, the I-formation, play-action passes, the triple stack and zone defenses. Though he and other coaches used some of these at the college level, Stram was the first to bring them to pro football to revolt against the dogma of run-oriented offenses and 4-3 defenses of the NFL. His successes finally culminated in winning the 1970 Super Bowl against the Minnesota Vikings, the last year before the AFL merged into the NFL.

The book is light, enjoyable reading for any football or sports fan. Stram has given us a perspective on college and pro football few people are granted; yet he is willing to admit mistakes he made along the way, to have fun at his work and to recognize, as he says, "football, like life, is about change."

'One-Hat' aids those facing workers, bosses

THE ONE-HAT SOLUTION: Rogers' Strategy for Creative Middle Management. By Henry C. Rogers (St. Martin's Press, $15.95).

By ROGER GREGORY
Special writer, The Oregonian

Are you a working professional who answers to the nebulous label "middle manager"? Do you suffer from corporate schizophrenia by being "boss" to some and "employee" to others? This book is for you.

Henry Rogers pens a refreshing read, full of solid advice, illuminating illustrations and anecdotes based on a 50-year career in public relations. His basic premise is that constantly changing boss and employee hats "can result in confusion, inconsistency, equivocation, and tension, both for yourself and for those above and below you."

Rogers' solution also is simple: "It may sound corny, but the best and most basic Rogers' rule is also the Golden Rule: Do Unto Others as You Would Have Them Do Unto You." Though you must of necessity wear two hats, according to Rogers, you must train yourself to combine them into a single hat of selling yourself to both employees and bosses.

From there the book expands into such areas as delegating authority and going to bat for your subordinates. The reader even learns to handle in a positive fashion such uncomfortable situations as saying no, giving out criticism ("criticism should be like a sandwich" — given out between layers of praise), and even dismissing employees.

While the author is able to drop names of his more famous clients, he actually prefers to use his own employees as examples of what and what not to do. Refreshingly enough, Rogers is humble enough to "tell on himself" and include some of his own biggest gaffes. He even takes the viewpoint that sometimes getting fired from a job could be the best thing to happen to someone, given the right circumstances. (It happened to him, by the way).

Particularly helpful to the middle manager is a chapter that catalogs how to handle different types of difficult employees and bosses. A short but valuable chapter on timing in approaching your subordinates and your boss also is well worth a second look. "When you see someone gobbling Tylenol or Bromo-Seltzer, steer clear."

This book is a valuable addition to the art of middle management. Middle managers and people aspiring to move up from those ranks would benefit from it. Rogers' effort is proof that theory cannot fully substitute for experience. He has made an effort throughout his career to learn from others; his readers would do well to emulate him.

Rob Reiner slowly shaking 'meathead' image

By STEPHEN HOLDEN
New York Times News Service

Rob Reiner, the son of the comedian and film-maker Carl Reiner, is still much more famous for his television portrayal of Michael "Meathead" Stivic on "All in the Family" than for directing films. But his three features — "This Is Spinal Tap," a viciously accurate documentary spoof of a heavy-metal rock band, the romantic comedy "The Sure Thing" and now "Stand by Me," an adventure drama about four small-town boys that opens Friday — have established him as a director with a keen eye for veracity. Especially with "Stand by Me," adapted from Stephen King's novella "The Body," Reiner took the story very personally.

"Stephen's novella was set in 1960, but since I was 12 in 1959, we moved it back a year, because the references seemed even more natural to me," Reiner said. "The film became a blend of Stephen's story and mine."

When Reiner first read the screenplay for "Stand by Me," he wasn't sure what the movie wanted to say. "Initially, the story of four 12-year-old boys who go off looking for a dead body struck me as a meandering tale in which not much happened, except that they found it," the director recalled recently. "Then I started thinking about what led Stephen to write the piece, which is very uncharacteristic and very autobiographical, since Gordie, the narrator of the story, becomes a writer. The film only came into focus after I made my own personal connections to it.

"Andy Scheinman, the producer, and I incorporated an idea I had about a boy who doesn't think much of himself because his parents don't understand him. He can only gain self-acceptance through the cooperation of his peers. The feelings Gordie expresses in the film were very much like feelings I've had for most of my life."

"Stand by Me" almost didn't get made in the first place. Two days before shooting was to begin under the auspices of Embassy Pictures, the company was sold to Coca-Cola and the movie had no financing. Reiner's mentor, Norman Lear, who provided backing for his two previous films, rushed in to save the day.

Lear is also backing the director's new picture, "The Princess Bride," based on the William Goldman novel, which is currently shooting in London.

Renowned Eakins always in trouble

By LEE WINFREY
Knight-Ridder News Service

Television

Seventy years after his death, Thomas Eakins has achieved a breadth of local respect and popularity that he seldom enjoyed when he was alive and painting. The artist's aggravations and achievements are recalled Wednesday in a PBS documentary filmed in the Philadelphia settings where they occurred.

This episode of the "American Masters" series (10 p.m., KOAP) labors under the clumsy subtitle of "Thomas Eakins: A Motion Portrait." But if you're interested in or merely curious about the man often ranked as the greatest American painter of the 19th century, just tune in and don't worry about what the subtitle is supposed to mean.

Whenever Eakins' story is retold on TV or in print, it qualifies as a good news-bad news mixture for the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia. The good news is that the academy basks in reflected glory, since Eakins taught there for a decade in his prime. The bad news is that the academy, in an action now considered hopelessly quaint and old-fashioned, forced Eakins to resign in 1886.

When Eakins was a student at the academy, the place was so buttoned-up that only statues were used as models. After he became a teacher, he was booted out because he undraped a male model in front of some female students.

Nowadays, that seems doubly a bum rap because Eakins, unlike Peter Paul Rubens and many other masters, was not even renowned as a painter of nudes. Respectful of women, he was about as far as one can get from being a dirty old man.

But, as Wednesday's show reminds us, Eakins was constantly getting into trouble, even when he painted masterpieces. Among the works that drew Philadelphia criticism were two of his most famous, "Max Schmitt in a Single Scull" (1871) and "The Gross Clinic" (1875).

Some Philadelphians, says narrator Sam Waterston, didn't like "Max Schmitt" because they thought the scullers looked like "crude men." Art was supposed to elevate the psyche back then, not show life in the raw, or even sweaty.

"The Gross Clinic" is a realistic study of Dr. Samuel Gross, a friend of Eakins, lecturing to students in a dissection class at Jefferson Medical College. The sensitive tastes of some Philadelphians were offended by blood on Gross' scalpel and an incision on the cadaver he was using as a teaching tool.

In 1884, a local man commissioned a painting by Eakins and the artist responded with one of his best, "The Swimming Hole." The patron refused to accept it because the swimmers were naked. If the misguided patron had accepted it, his heirs would have sound reason to revere him today.

Eakins never backed off in the face of such Philistinism. Demonstrating visible pride in his work, he included likenesses of himself as a sculler in "Max Schmitt," as a student in "Gross Clinic" and as a nude bather in "Swimming Hole."

Things got so bad near the end of Eakins' life that many people, after commissioning him to do portraits, rejected the final results, sometimes refusing to accept the paintings even when Eakins offered them free. Eakins painted what he saw, without cosmetic correction, so some of his subjects turned out to be less handsome or pretty than they had hoped and expected.

Although Eakins sold only about 25 to 30 paintings in his lifetime, he did enjoy one big break: He was never a starving artist. His father, Benjamin, furnished him with a private income that enabled Eakins to be as grumpy and contrary as he wished and pay no severe economic consequences as a result.

Kevin Conway portrays Eakins in several scenes re-enacted from the painter's life.

When viewing Wednesday's "American Masters" program, don't rush to your color-control button, because all of this episode is in black and white. That is because much of it has been drawn from a 1973 film, "Eakins," which contained old footage that is particularly valuable because it includes interviews with two women who modeled for the artist.

Peter Farrell is on vacation.

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Aug. 27 through 31 — Caravan Stage Company, British Columbian horse-drawn theater, European Plaza.
Through Aug. 31 — Human Powered Transportation, special exhibition.
Through Aug. 31 — Rita MacNeil, Cape Breton singer/songwriter, Folklife.
Through Aug. 31 — Sidney Howard, Cape Breton folk carver, Folklife.
Aug. 28 — Yokohama Day.
Aug. 28 — Sen Amano Taiko Ensemble, percussion and music from Yokohama, Xerox International Theatre.
Aug. 28 — Johnny Cash, 8 p.m., Expo Theatre.
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