

Author Author!

BY FLORENCE KING

Fighting Words

In this space in our last issue, subscribers will recall, Florence King reviewed the life and books of fellow Southern writer Molly Ivins. In the course of so doing, King discovered in an Ivins collection several samples of her own writing that had been lifted without attribution. In another case, King had been credited, but the quote had been heavily rewritten within the quotation marks. King charged plagiarism, and told reporters that "if we had the right kind of laws in this country I'd challenge her to duel over this." The original article in The American Enterprise and the sharp exchanges that followed were covered by newspapers and magazines from across the country. The two letters below represent the final fallout in the war of wits.

August 16, 1995

Dear Ms. King,
You are quite right. There are three sentences in my article "Magnolias and Moonshine"—one of them a really good political line—that should have been attributed directly to you and are not.

On the third matter you raise in your AUTHOR AUTHOR! column in *The American Enterprise*, I have no idea how I managed to attribute to you more than you actually said—perhaps a recollection of something somewhere else in one of your books on the South. But I do not think a mistake of excessive attribution can be considered plagiarism.

I owe you an apology and I hereby tender it. I am deeply ashamed. I regret not giving you credit, and devoutly wish the matter had been brought to my attention earlier so it might have been corrected in subsequent editions and the paperback edition of the book.

I hope this does not sound too defensive to you, but there was no intention on my part to deceive anyone into thinking I

had not read the many funny things you have said about the South. I hope my good faith is evidenced by the fact that I did cite you directly six times in the piece and praise one of your books as "definitive" on the peculiarities of Southerners as well.

I was inexcusably sloppy about the three sentences in question, with emphasis on the inexcusably.

Over the years, I have not only quoted many of your wonderful lines about the South in speeches—always, I believe, giving you credit—but also recommended your books to hundreds of people. I realize this does not excuse my lifting lines of yours without credit, but I did want you to know.

As for the rest of your observations about me and my work in your AUTHOR AUTHOR! column, boy you really are a mean b——, aren't you?

Sincerely,
Molly Ivins, plagiarist

August 24, 1995

Dear Miss Ivins:
Rather than rehash what I call plagiarism and you call careless attribution, I will speak in general terms.

First, the *Washington Post*, in breaking this story, referred to your "side" and my "side." How can there be a "side" in this when everyone involved is either a writer or an editor? All of us, by definition, are on the same side—the word side. Every word I write is a piece of my heart, and I presume you feel the same way.

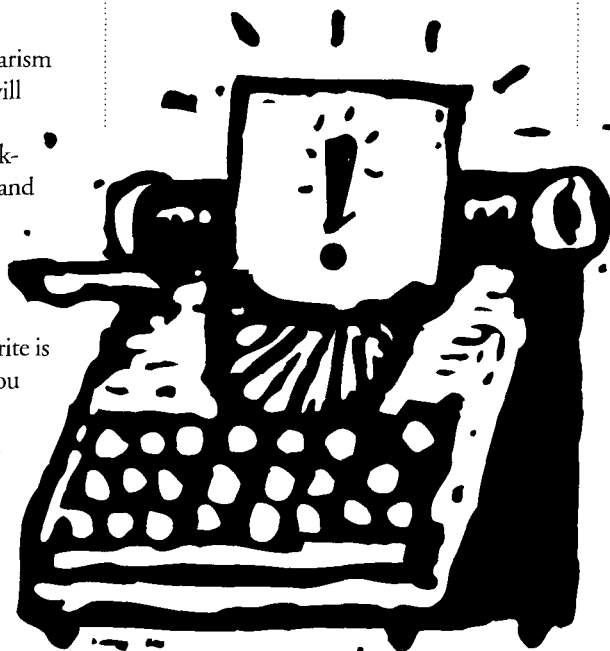
Second, I'm wondering how you managed to recycle me unchanged from the 1988 *Mother Jones* article into the 1991 book. When I compiled *The Florence King Reader*, I reread everything I've published

over the last 20 years. I polished, revised, even rewrote some of the early selections to bring them up to my present standards, and I also prepared a fresh manuscript. This is how you catch mistakes. Anthologies are harder than they look, so please look next time.

Third, your publisher contends that I am seeking publicity by "attempting to hang onto the cape of Molly's notoriety." (You may want to take issue with him over his choice of words.) I have no need or wish for "notoriety"; celebrity is bad enough. I already have the only thing I want: the admiration and respect of people who know good writing and love the English language as I do.

Finally, it's a shame this had to happen because you and I are such a pair of old rips that we probably would have gotten along like gangbusters. Please don't spoil any more potential friendships.

Sincerely,
Florence King





The world is covered with sunken treasures.

Most of our world lies beneath the oceans. Below the surface, a powerful impact on the lives of the creatures we wear, and medicines that we use. Now we protect the oceans and their treasures. Now, a fascinating exhibition at the Smithsonian Institution called



Ocean Planet tells this story in a unique way. A proud sponsor, Motorola invites you to experience this exciting new view of our world. Ocean Planet is now at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. and will be traveling to cities across the U.S.



D^{the} Digest

SUMMARIES OF IMPORTANT NEW RESEARCH FROM THE NATION'S
UNIVERSITIES, THINK TANKS, AND INVESTIGATIVE PUBLICATIONS

POLITICS

The Drive-By Election?

Geoff Earle, "Motor Trouble for Democrats," in *Governing* (August 1995), 2300 N Street NW #760, Washington, DC 20037.

It's long been an axiom of electoral politics that Republicans tend to win elections with low turnouts, while Democrats win high-volume elections. That's one reason Republicans in Congress opposed the 1993 "motor voter" law, which declared that, after January 1, 1995, all voters could register while renewing their driver's licenses. Republican governors in many states have refused to implement the law; California governor Pete Wilson declared the motor voter law "flatly unconstitutional" and refused to enforce the law until forced to in June by a court order.

But these governors, argues free-lancer Earle, shouldn't worry that much, because states that require voters to declare a party affiliation when registering are seeing increasing numbers of independents, not Democrats. In Kentucky, for example, 3 percent of voters in the 1992 election said they were independents, but 25 percent of new voters opted for the independent line. In 1992, 3 percent of Oklahoma voters declared themselves independent, while 26 percent of new voters have registered as independents. Similar trends are taking place in other states where Democrats have the most to fear from a rise in independent registrations.

Democrats may still make gains with the motor voter law's provision requiring in-

creased voter registration drives in welfare offices, which currently account for 8 percent of motor voter registrations. While some Democratic advocates argue that this provision of the law will add as many as 5 million new Democrats to the voter rolls, it is not clear whether welfare recipients will "turn out to vote in the same numbers as others recruited by the new law."

It may well be, Earle predicts, that the ultimate effect of the motor voter law will be to increase the volatility of the 1996 election. For while the law may be creating masses of new voters, he says, "it doesn't seem to be creating masses of new Democrats."

Democracies at War

Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, "Democratization and the Danger of War," in *International Security* (Summer 1995), MIT Press, 55 Hayward Street, Cambridge, MA 02138.

One truism of international relations is that democracies don't go to war against each other. But currently the somewhat democratic nations of Croatia and Serbia are battling each other, as are the semi-democratic states of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Does this break the pattern?

Columbia University political scientists Mansfield and Snyder suggest it's still true that "well-institutionalized democracies that reliably place authority in the hands of the average voter virtually never fight wars against each other." But new democracies are more likely to engage in conflict than

mature ones. Examining a database of all conflicts between 1811 and 1980, the authors conclude that fragile democracies are one-third more likely to enter a conflict (including civil wars) than stable democracies or even autocracies.

Mansfield and Snyder find that in partial democracies, ruling elites tend to reach out only to selected special interests, encouraging voters to form single-issue lobbies instead of working through political parties. Many such lobbies, the authors argue, have a "parochial interest in war, military preparation, empire, and protectionism." In countries that are becoming democratic, extreme nationalistic organizations are also more likely to have their voices heard.

In this way, foreign policies that give vague encouragement to democracy might actually produce a more unstable and violent world. A better policy would be to provide "golden parachutes" to those people (generals, nuclear scientists, "smokestack industrialists") in potential democracies who are most threatened by change. Funds that encourage a free press and unconstrained political debate might also insure more stable democracies in the formerly Communist nations. But whatever the West might do, it's clear that many nations trying to become democracies will undergo a "turbulent transition" before they become free and stable states.

ECONOMICS

Sell the World Bank

Nicholas Eberstadt and Clifford Lewis, "Privatizing the World Bank," in *The National Interest* (Summer 1995), 1112 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20036.

For some time now, the World Bank has advised struggling third-world countries to privatize inefficient government monopolies to improve their national fortune. Eberstadt, a visiting scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, and Lewis, director of Stornoway Investments, argue that it's time for the World Bank to apply this good advice to itself—and undergo privatization.

The World Bank was founded in 1944 to provide funds for countries either ravaged by war or in the process of becoming