

with a mere \$90,000. Mike Tyson has even paid King a bogus \$100,000 "sanctioning fee" before his fights.

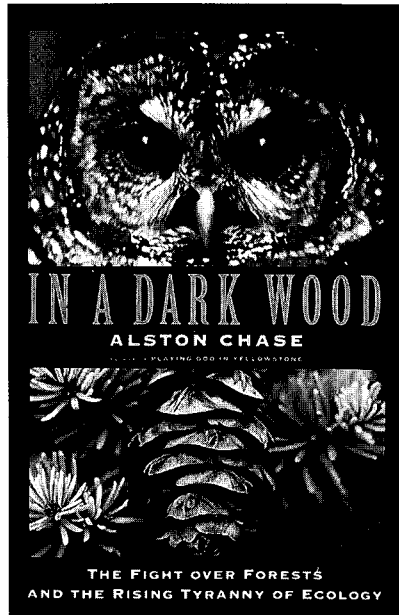
Not surprisingly, over 100 lawsuits have been filed against King since 1978, but only two have been successful. When fighter Ernie Butler threatened to sue, King told him to drop the idea, "or else." When heavyweight champion Larry Holmes threatened to change promoters, King promised to have his legs broken. "Not for a single minute," says Holmes, "did I think it wasn't a real threat." As Newfield puts it, "Boxing is the only sport in which the lions are afraid of the rats."

The rat in this case may have his own predator to fear. King's ties to the Mafia are well-documented, and the FBI knows through informants (such as the Reverend Al Sharpton) that King met with John Gotti in December 1982. According to one source, Gotti slapped King for not "paying his debts to us on time...that guy's got to be taught a lesson and John will take care of it." This wasn't the first time that King had been roughed up. When King tried to swindle Trevor Berbick's promoter, James Cornelius, in 1981, Cornelius and four large friends tracked King down in the Bahamas and administered a professional beating, breaking his nose and punching out teeth.

The FBI believes that King has fleeced his fighters so ruthlessly over the years because he has owed so much money to his silent partner, the mob. Larry Holmes posits a psychological reason: "With Don, it was making money off [fighters], sure, but there was something more to it.... I believe deep-down Don King hates fighters, is jealous of them, because we can do what a fat old bullshitter like him can't do—and that's fight. That is why he wanted to have such power over us, to humiliate us." Holmes never did like carrying King's luggage through the airports.

Tim Witherspoon, on the other hand, could care less about what ultimately motivates Don King. To him, it's a simple matter of race and robbery: "Don's specialty is black-on-black crime. I'm black and he robbed me."

*Theodore Pappas is the managing editor of Chronicles.*



## CLEARCUTTING ENVIRONMENTALISTS

By Karl Hess, Jr.

*In A Dark Wood: The Fight Over Forests and The Rising Tyranny of Ecology,*  
By Alston Chase, Houghton Mifflin,  
479 pages, \$29.95

**I**n the euphoric afterglow of Earth Day 1970, who could have predicted that a warm and fuzzy species protection act would catapult the Pacific Northwest into social and economic turmoil? Probably no one, though according to Alston Chase the writing was on the wall—or, to be more accurate, nesting high in a tree in a dark wood.

*In a Dark Wood* is Alston Chase's riveting account of the epic contest between loggers and greens for the ultimate environmental prize: the coastal old-growth forests of northern California and Oregon. These are where the world's tallest trees—the redwood and the Douglas fir—grow, and where the northern spotted owl unleashed the Endangered Species Act and shut down the Northwestern rural economy.

Chase's account of this timber war is intriguing: "It is a tale without heroes or villains, in which the bad guy isn't a person at all but an idea." The idea is biocentrism—the view that all living things have equal value. It is, Chase claims, the battle cry of greens out to topple humanism and science in favor of ecological theory.

Well before the spotted owl felled its first timber harvest, Chase was busy debunking the ecology of natural regulation and other aspects of green cosmology in *Playing God in Yellowstone*. That book is a landmark. It was the first to take the Park Service to task, and it moved me to write *Rocky Times in Rocky Mountain National Park*. But where Chase ascribed Yellowstone's dying willows, aspen, beavers, and grizzlies to the faulty ideas of eco-philosophers, I faulted the political incentives facing the Park Service.

Chase is right that the Pacific timber war took a toll in human suffering. As environmentalists hammered away at timber sales in the courts and through guerrilla protests, men and women lost their jobs, alcoholism and abuse soared, children lost the safety net of functional families, and entire communities fractured. If human sympathy was all that mattered, Chase's book would tower like a Douglas fir. But it isn't—and the book doesn't.

Chase begins by debunking old-growth forests as environmental fantasies and biological deserts. They were rare, he claims, until the advent of fire suppression and the removal of native Americans. Prior to settler meddling, fire swept through western forests at intervals of 80 to 100 years. Nature was in constant rebirth, and old growth was merely a fuel source for forest regeneration.

Chase has the sweep of history right, but the details of forest ecology wrong. Old growth is not a biological desert. True, the forest floor is relatively sterile when 100- to 250-year-old trees are tightly packed. But as the forest matures, trees die, the canopy opens to sunlight, and a rich diversity of species not found in younger timber emerges. Sadly, Chase's treatment of old growth is stuck in the 100- to 250-year age rut where trees look old but the forest is still young.

A bigger problem is Chase's claim that old growth is uncommon in a natural regime of frequent fires. The Yacoult burn in 1902 and the Tillamook burn in 1933 show how devastating Pacific Northwest fires can be. But the fact is that even in an environment where big fires happen, the dominant age class of unlogged stands of redwood and Douglas

fir is 450 years or more. Chase is right that more big trees cover the Pacific Northwest today than a century ago. But most of them are under 200 years of age—old enough to be gargantuan but too young to recreate the habitat that covered 70 percent of the region's coastal forests at the time of Anglo settlement.

When Chase attacks ecologists for embracing static models of nature he is dead wrong. Ecologists embrace the same dynamic ecology he does. The only difference is that advocates of old growth want fire, insects, and disease to do what Chase wants to do with timbering. The crux is that Chase abhors waste and inefficiency. Redwood and Douglas fir trees can't last forever, so why not log rather than squander them?

*In A Dark Wood* is really a manifesto for the Wise Use movement, and an apology for socialism in the name of community stability. Chase believes that government has a duty to save rural logging communities dependent on public lands. To that end, he lashes out at free market critics of subsidized timber sales.

Chase bogs down in eco-bashing. By innuendo (noting that Nazis were green) he tries to link green ecology to tyranny. He points to environmentalists like Dave Foreman—founder of Earth First!—and groups like The Wildlands Project to conjure a green conspiracy that entails “perhaps the forced relocation of tens of millions of people.” Ecology come of age is, for Chase, totalitarian to its Green core.

This is nonsense. In the Fall 1995 issue of *Wild Earth*, the official publication of the Wildlands Project, publisher Dave Foreman called on Greens “to use libertarian ideas to protect biological diversity and wilderness.” In the same issue, Wendell Berry made an impassioned plea to safeguard private property as the bulwark of conservation. Such subtleties are lost in Chase's tirade against ecology.

The Pacific timber war was never about biocentrism. It was about an epic struggle to control a common resource. Greens won in the Pacific timber war because they rode the wave of urban values sweeping the Northwest. An emergent majority claimed the towering forests that had fed, clothed, housed, and employed a tiny speck of the American population for

the better part of a century. Greens merely played the game mastered by loggers for decades: manipulation of the massive powers of the federal government.

Chase concludes *In A Dark Wood* as if he understands this. In the final three pages he assails government ownership of “a third of the real estate in America,” and the “numbing uniformity” it promotes. Chase should have heeded his own warning; he should have made *In A Dark Wood* a celebration of landscape diversity, and welcomed the break from half a century of federal, monocultural forestry.

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## PARADISE LOST

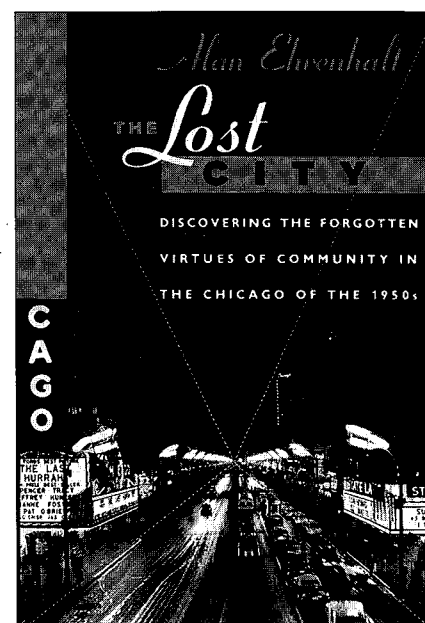
By Rabbi Mayer Schiller

*The Lost City: Discovering the Virtues of Community in the Chicago of the 1950s*  
By Alan Ehrenhalt, Basic Books, 310 pages, \$24

This book tells the haunting story of a happy and enchanted land, safe and secure, full of faith and character, of meaning and consolation, whose very existence seems mythical to those who never lived there. Some who did live there have come to doubt whether it was quite as marvelous as their memories tell them. *The Lost City*, Alan Ehrenhalt's moving portrait of 1950s Chicago, reminds us that many of our sweet memories of that very different era are true, and in the process challenges many of the imposed beliefs of our time.

“Millions of Americans now reaching middle age,” observes Ehrenhalt, currently “mourn for something of” the 1950s. They yearn for the “loyalties and lasting relationships that characterized those days.” Their longing is essentially for “a sense of community that they believe existed during their childhoods and does not exist now.”

*The Lost City* does not issue a uniform endorsement of the '50s. Its author tends to accept popular dogmas on everything from “sexism” and “homophobia” to



racial egalitarianism and Vatican II. It is the basically liberal cast of Ehrenhalt's mind which makes this book so painful to read. He realizes that “every dream we have about re-creating community in the absence of authority will turn out to be a pipe dream in the end.” He exhorts the “generation that launched the rebellion” to “recognize that privacy, individuality, and choice are not free goods and the society that places no restrictions on them pays a high price for that decision.” Yet in the end one searches his book in vain for ideas of how we are to restore the vibrant local parish in the post-Vatican II Church, how discipline is to be enforced in schools and homes without the old-time methods of which Ehrenhalt consistently disproves; how we are to have a “majority culture strong enough” to teach children behavioral standards when that culture is undefended.

We can only feel sorry for Ehrenhalt and his “millions” of middle-aged Americans. For the simple truth they find impossible to admit is that the slide into the abyss they rightly worry over cannot be halted unless one is pledged to a robust, Orthodox version of Catholicism, Protestantism or Judaism or, at the very least, to a firm vision of our European culture and its traditional standards.

The safe, efficient, livable Chicago of the 1950s will not be restored by Republicans peddling “balanced budgets” or De-