

*Respect for valor  
lives on  
amidst life's whirl.*

## REMEMBER THE ALAMO!

By William Murchison

*A Line in the Sand: The Alamo in Blood and Memory*

By Randy Roberts and James S. Olson  
Free Press, 352 pages, \$26

Who doesn't know, or think he knows, the story of the Alamo? The events of the great 13-day siege of 1836 are generally familiar. General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna's numerically superior army annihilated a small garrison of now-legendary figures—Jim Bowie, William B. Travis, Davy Crockett, to name the best-known—who chose death over surrender. At San Jacinto a month and a half later, the Texans went on to pay back the Mexicans, winning Texas an independence it maintained until joining the United States nine years later.

Yes, but what did it *mean*? Such is the undying question which Randy Roberts and James Olson address in this admirable book. Speaking as a seventh-generation Texan, I judge the authors to have set the standard henceforth for consideration of the topic.

Not that all native Texans will savor their every conclusion. The myth of the Alamo, presently subject to disparagement and depreciation, is bred in our bones. It was a heroic fight for freedom, we learned early. As the theme song in John Wayne's epic movie *The Alamo* insisted, "They died to give us freedom / That is all we need to know / Of the 13 days of glory at the siege of Alamo."

Well, not quite all, apparently. Myths seem to produce counter-myths. Cultural dispositions erode. Heroism once was in vogue; selfless sacrifice was an ideal. Recognition of these deeds and qualities served national purposes, scratched cultural itches. Quite different are the standards of our era. The heroes of the Alamo, according to one prissy revisionist writer, were "pirates," "fanatics," and "hairy, wild-eyed rebels."

Roberts and Olson look coldly on that viewpoint, but what they address is not just the battle of the Alamo, but also the ways in which succeeding generations have appropriated it for their own purposes. The authors provide valuable context to details familiar from folklore, television, and movies. For instance, the cultural outlooks of the warriors: The Texans were adventurous, liberty-loving, and not over-fond of Mexican-Catholic culture. Santa Anna was steeped in some of that culture's then-worst aspects: despotism and bloody reprisal for rebellion. In 1836, little sympathy existed between gringos and Mexicans. The massacre of the defenders fused in the minds of Houston's soldiers the motives of vengeance and patriotism.

Around the Alamo legend the state's sense of identity coalesced. Memories of the glorious revolution kept Texans after the Civil War "from wallowing in 'Lost Causism' like other Southern states." Even before Fess Parker became "King of the Wild Frontier" in Disney's TV lionization of Davy Crockett, the Alamo was "our noblest exemplification of sacrifice, heroic and pure." This was on the authority of Franklin D. Roosevelt, visiting the shrine during the 1936 Texas Centennial.

Disney's TV series transformed the Alamo "from a Texas shrine to an American one," responsive to Cold War ten-

sions and the sense "that America needed heroes who represented liberty and the rights of man." Walt "consciously turned the Alamo into freedom's last stand," and the nation went wild in response.

Shortly afterwards came John Wayne. His 1960 movie, *The Alamo*—"not just a Texas story but an American story, a tale of brutal oppression and the struggle to be free"—did good but not great business. Was the legend about to crest, along with unambiguous American dedication to the frontier virtues of heroism and sacrifice?

By the 1980s, the Alamo had become "one of the most hotly contested symbols in the nation," refracting the views of America then on offer: home of the brave versus racist-imperialist blight. No consensus on the Alamo appears possible until we decide what kind of nation we are, a prospect that looks less and less imminent. Multiculturalism reduces hopes for any unified view of the Alamo's meaning. Will new immigrants find resonance in the story? Texas Mexicans—the state's second largest ethnic group—don't currently appear resentful concerning the Alamo experience, but may remain so only to the extent that Anglo Texans refrain from frantic boast and foolish word.

The glory days of the Alamo legend seem behind us. Yet as Roberts and Olson suggest, the lure of the place should endure. Circumstances and perspectives change with time and human movement. Respect for valor, amid all the whirl, continues.

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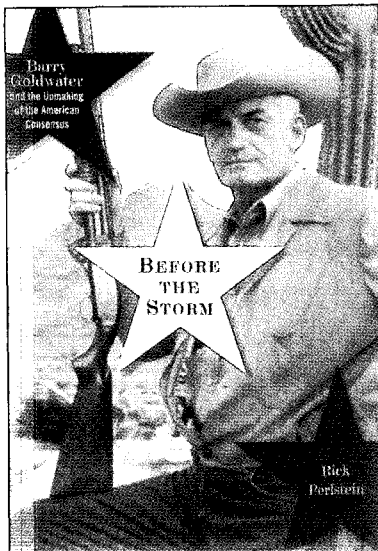
## THE '60S VIEWED RIGHTLY

By Llewellyn H. Rockwell, Jr.

*Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus*

By Rick Perlstein  
Hill and Wang, 671 pages, \$30

"America would remember the sixties As a decade of the Left," writes Rick Perlstein, in his fascinating and revisionist



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account of how the 1964 presidential campaign marked a new course of American political life. Really it was the "decade when the polarization began."

The polarization concerned the role of government. In his 1964 campaign against Barry Goldwater, Lyndon Baines Johnson articulated the postwar liberal consensus: "Government is not an enemy of the people. It is the people." Goldwater championed individual rights and liberties, and called the government "a Leviathan, a vast national authority out of touch with the people, and out of control." LBJ won the election by a huge margin, but over the long run, according to Perlstein, Goldwater's vision has triumphed.

Among the book's major contributions is tracing the origin of the Goldwater movement to Clarence Manion, former dean of the Notre Dame Law School. Manion, a man of the anti-Roosevelt Old Right, was displeased to see Eisenhower carrying on the New Deal rather than repudiating it. This inspired much work, including his effort to draft Barry Goldwater for president.

The man and the movement needed a manifesto, and it was Manion who set out to create one. He decided on William Buckley's brother-in-law, Brent Bozell, as ghostwriter, and in six weeks, Bozell finished *Conscience of a Conservative*. Rather than deal with a left-wing New York publisher, Manion contracted directly with a printer. The book debuted at number 14 on the *New York Times* bestseller list, and by November 1960, had sold 500,000 copies.

"I have little interest in streamlining government or making it more efficient for I mean to reduce its size," the book proclaimed. "I do not undertake to promote welfare for I propose to extend freedom. My aim is not to pass laws, but to repeal them."

Yet Goldwater also proposed to expand the state. His book urged the U.S. government to summon the will and the means to take the initiative against the Russians. Later, in the sort of rhetoric that would lead to his defeat, he was to advocate atom-bombing North Vietnam—a far cry from the limited government theory that had set his movement in motion.

Besides giving Manion his rightful place, the book also credits William J. Baroody, Sr. of the American Enterprise Institute with being the chief intellectual entrepreneur of the Goldwater campaign. Discussing the increasing influence of AEI, Perlstein says that "ideas once enforced at union-busting manufacturing by goonsquad and court injunction now received scientific demonstration by economists with Austrian names."

More surprising is the role that William Buckley played. Buckley had been skeptical about Goldwater since 1959, and had even pooh-poohed the idea of *Conscience of a Conservative*. He early on said, "I don't want to be identified with a total political failure," and wrote a series of hostile newspaper columns. Late in the campaign, Buckley told Richard Clurman, chief correspondent of *Time*, that if Goldwater were elected, "That might be a serious problem." Later, speaking to a shocked and silent Young Americans for Freedom convention, he dismissed the campaign:

"We do not believe in the Platonic affirmation of our own little purities."

But the campaign was most hobbled by Goldwater's support of war, precisely the part of his platform Buckley most approved of. He promised to end the draft as soon as possible, but it was not enough. The famous daisy/atom bomb TV commercial wounded Goldwater, and Americans came to fear he would start a nuclear conflict. So, on election day, the (apparent) peace candidate won.

The entire drama—the draft movement, the nomination struggle, Nelson Rockefeller, the hopelessly biased media—is chronicled in these pages. The smears are especially bracing to recount. We are reminded of Walter Cronkite's and Daniel Schorr's on-air claim that Goldwater was going to Hitler's former vacation home in Bavaria to meet neo-Nazis. Norman Mailer, covering the convention for *Esquire*, said the resounding cheers reminded him of *Sieg Heils*. Pornographer Ralph Ginzberg set up *Fact* magazine to recruit psychiatrists who would call Goldwater crazy. A Methodist magazine referred to its issue on Goldwaterism as a "continuation of its response to the threat of Hitler."

Though "our own little purities" only won 27 million votes, Americans did not forget the call for freedom from federal power. And many of the astounding 3.9 million Goldwater volunteers remained active in politics. Indeed, with the end of the Cold War making possible the end of warfare ideology on the right, the domestic heart of Goldwaterism is making progress once again.

These days, hardly anyone outside academia believes that the more that government manages social and economic life, the better off we will be. To a great extent, we are still in the midst of the anti-New Deal revolution, and far closer today to seeing its potential fulfilled than we were in 1964.

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# The Digest

*Summaries of important new research from the nation's universities, think tanks, and investigative publications*

## POLITICS

### Campaign Finance Reform: The First Amendment Comes First

Bradley A. Smith. *Unfree Speech: The Folly of Campaign Finance Reform*. Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08540.

Federal Election Commissioner Smith warns that if campaign finance reformers have their way, Americans may end up with a system where “no political speech is allowed except with prior approval of the government.”

Few of the ways candidates express themselves—pamphlets, newspaper ads, T.V. commercials—are free. “If spending money were not a form of speech,” Smith writes, “the First Amendment would become hollow for all but newspapers and other press outlets, since any effort to spread one’s message, through advertising or pamphleteering, could be stripped of First Amendment protections simply by attacking the expenditure of money.”

Smith also contends that money doesn’t influence politicians as much as many believe. Tough anti-bribery laws prohibit politicians from directly performing favors in return for campaign contributions. The reason the Abscam scandal of the 1970s and the Keating Five scandal of the 1980s were shocking was because they were atypical.

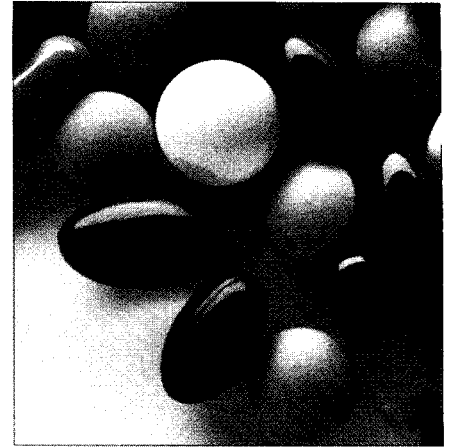
Since reformers can’t prove money corrupts politicians, they argue campaign contributions unfairly open doors for lobbyists. What’s overlooked is that lobbying

organizations have influence not only because of their donations, but because they represent mass groups. The National Rifle Association’s clout on Capitol Hill, for example, doesn’t just come from its campaign contributions, but from the over 3 million NRA members who represent up to 5 percent of the voters in some congressional districts. With such large memberships, groups like the NRA, the teachers’ unions, and the AARP would maintain great influence even if political donations were severely restricted.

Some politicians, under the pretense of cleaning up Congress, want to censor political speech they don’t like. Some, like Democratic presidential contender Bill Bradley, have proposed taxing issue-oriented political advertisements. His GOP rival, Sen. John McCain, likewise expressed a desire, were it Constitutional, to ban all negative campaign advertisements.

Others call for outright government regulation of the press, claiming that newspaper editorial endorsements are unregulated campaign contributions. Ohio state solicitor Richard Hasen, for example, would issue every potential voter a \$100 voucher, which campaigns could collect and spend. Interest groups could also spend these vouchers, provided they were pre-approved by federal authorities. No other spending by campaigns would be allowed under Hasen’s proposal. Even editorial pages would have to collect vouchers before they would be allowed to endorse candidates.

“The attempt to regulate political



speech in the guise of campaign finance reform has been a folly,” Smith concludes. Far better, he believes, for vigorous campaigns conducted according to the rules of the First Amendment—that “Congress shall make no law...abridging freedom of the speech, or of the press.”

## ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

### Drug Prices Are Reasonable

Ronald Bailey, “Damn the Pusher Man,” in *Reason* (April 2001), 3415 South Sepulveda Boulevard #400, Los Angeles, California 90034.

Science correspondent Bailey suggests that most criticisms of big pharmaceutical companies are unfounded. Among them:

- *Drug prices are too high.* Spending on prescription drugs is increasing rapidly, with increases between 1997 and 1999 of between 14 and 19 percent. But that’s because we’re consuming more drugs, not because average unit costs are rising—between 1993 and 1999 inflation rose 18 percent, and drug prices rose 18.1 percent. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average American spends 1 percent of his income on prescription drugs—about the amount spent on tobacco and alcohol.

As drug prices rise, hospital stays decrease. Columbia University econo-