

scolded him, they didn't really demand much work out of him, they got him used to a high standard of living, and they drugged him with promises of a financially secure old age. In short, they undermined his good old-fashioned American get-up-and-go.

There is, of course, a certain amount of validity in Mr. Harrington's description of what goes on inside the huge socialist states that private enterprise has created in this country. (After all, most clichés begin life as misinterpretations of the obvious.) But why shoot Santa Claus just because he's suddenly given us more toys than we know what to do with? Mr. Harrington seems to be convinced that the public-relations departments of large corporations are full of frustrated poets who are prevented from making the most of their genius only by the benign tyranny of management. He complains that modern craftsmen can no longer identify their own human aspirations with their product, leaving gently unstressed the implication that the ink-stained scriveners who sat hunched over their copy work a century ago were luckier in that regard. Mr. Harrington's whining tone becomes absurd at last, and succeeds only in making it clear that the problem of man's self-realization has been revealed rather than created by the institutions of America's unprecedented prosperity. Thoreau may have lived a life of quiet desperation, but there is ample evidence right in Mr. Harrington's book that most people have usually been content with an amiable inertia, at least when their minds have not been distracted by starvation and the knout.

SOMEHOW Mr. Harrington manages to see the five-day week as part of a deliberate conspiracy against the individual, and for himself he has chosen freedom—or at least the freedom he fancies. After he had written a magazine article that contained the gist of what he has to say, he quit his job and got a grant from that grey-flanneled refuge for rebels, the Ford Foundation, so that he might contemplate his experiences at leisure and pad out his original argument to book length with a lot of improbably stogy anecdotes in which fictional depart-

ment supervisors obligingly speak the lines he has written for them. There are also a lot of irrelevant quotations from people like Nietzsche and Dostoevsky who saw the real problem earlier and better.

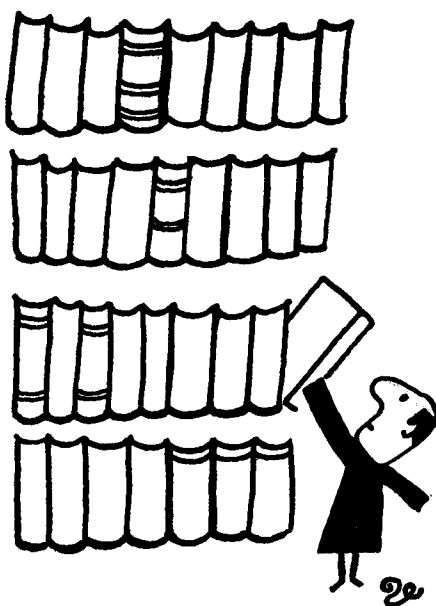
It's the old Dale Carnegie technique in reverse, and despite the negative quality of Mr. Harrington's thinking, his book is really nothing more than the bitter rind of Norman Vincent Peale.

It's All There

DAVID T. BAZELON

STATISTICAL ABSTRACT OF THE UNITED STATES: 1959. Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C. \$3.50.

They used to say of Sugar Ray Robinson that he was, pound for pound, the greatest fighter of the age; page for page, the *Abstract* is the greatest research tool of them all. We have here 1,042 pages, comprising thirty-four subject sections, consisting mostly of 1,227 statistical tables and forty-four charts, containing a half



million figures, referring in detail to who we are, what we did, how many and how much of this and of that. This layman's Univac will provide the discerning purchaser with many richly puzzling evenings of varied entertainment, and when used indiscriminately or malevolently is guaranteed to Irritate Friends and Confound Other People.

For instance, did you know that it took us a hundred years to move the center of population from twenty-three miles east of Baltimore,

Maryland, to twenty miles east of Columbus, Indiana, and sixty years more to get it out of Indiana to eight miles north-northwest of Olney, Richland County, Illinois, where it was left in 1950? (Incidentally, "center of population" is "that point upon which the U.S. would balance, if it were a rigid plane without weight and the population distributed thereon with each individual being assumed to have equal weight and to exert an influence on a central point proportional to his distance from the point"—which is the loveliest image of democratic equality that I have come across recently.)

Did you know that white people live eight years longer than non-white people? That in my age bracket alone there are 247,000 surplus women? That the state with the highest 1958 birth rate was New Mexico, with 33.3 per thousand? (It figures, since they had exactly that same marriage rate in 1950—the highest for any state except for Nevada's indecent 311.5 per thousand.) That each person in America who didn't eat 348 eggs last year got cheated? That in 1957 only *one* girl received a doctorate in law? (Who was she?) That in the last three years 60,000 more women than men came to the United States as immigrants, and more men than women packed up and left? Somebody knows what's what.

THE THIRTY-FOUR subject sections begin with "Population" and end with "Comparative International Statistics." They present twenty-seven fascinating pages on "Income, Expenditures, and Wealth," an expanded post-Sputnik coverage of "Power and Scientific Development," and encompass a universe of other subjects ranging through education,

labor, business, finance, agriculture, housing, etc., etc., to quantity and value of the New England herring catch (which happily doubled between 1930 and 1957). Each section is introduced by a page or so of text that outlines the coverage, indicates general sources (the specific source is stated after each of the 1,227 tables), notes deficient material, and gives warnings as to margins of error. In addition, there is a helpful table of contents, a forty-two-page index, a marvelously useful bibliography of sources, and a three-page preface which begins with a sonorous statement that the book "is the standard summary of statistics on the social, political and economic organization of the United States." The word "summary" is exquisitely well chosen, since the material included is drawn from all Federal statistical programs and all other local government and private sources deemed relevant or usable. The great beauty of the *Abstract*, at least for the serious researcher, is that it is not only a one-volume summary of everything useful or important but that it also—as if to apologize for being only one book—leads into every other major statistical source, governmental or private.

ONE CANNOT RESIST offering a few statistics on how this statistical Topsy grew. The first edition was published in 1878 by the Secretary of the Treasury, nobody remembers why. For twenty-five editions it stayed in Treasury, was then shunted around between Commerce and Labor from 1902 to 1937, and since 1938 has been settled comfortably with the Bureau of the Census. Until 1912 the book was a giveaway item for Congressmen, then was sold for fifty cents through 1920. Thereafter the price rose lackadaisically to a peak of \$3.75 in 1954 and 1958; it has settled back to \$3.50 this year. The coverage has changed widely over the years: e.g., about half of the early volumes were devoted to foreign commerce and navigation, now down to five per cent and less. For the last ten years, eighty new tables have been introduced annually. In 1948, 15,000 copies of the *Abstract* were printed and distributed; last year, 23,000 copies; this year, 24,000. (My informant at the

"WHAT WAS MY DADDY LIKE?"

Little Demetra Kouropdos often asks her mother, "What was my daddy like?" She loves to hear about her father. He is part of Demetra's dream.

Mrs. Kouropdos tells the little girl about their happy life in Athens before the father died. Demetra can hardly believe it. Life was so different then from the desperate poverty she knows today.

The father's wages supported his wife and little son Nicholas adequately. When Demetra was expected they were overjoyed. Two months before Demetra was born the father died of pneumonia. Demetra thinks he might have recovered if she could have nursed him. She dreams of being a nurse and helping other people.

Mrs. Kouropdos encourages Demetra's dream. But deep in her heart she doubts that it can ever be. Since her husband's death, they have moved to a tiny room. Her own health will not permit her to work. Her small pension will not support 2 children. To send Demetra to school she had to place her son in an orphanage.



Demetra knows that without help she too may be separated from her mother. Still she holds to her dream . . . she will become a nurse and help someone in need like the father she never knew.

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bureau looks forward to the day when distribution will reach as high as 100,000.) About 5,000 copies are giveaways to Congress, government agencies, libraries, and contributors. The overall production cost—of the book, not of the statistical programs (cost unknown) of the eighty-eight government agencies and fifty-nine private firms and research organizations which contribute to the contents—is about \$100,000. Sales receipts cover only Printing Office overhead and distribution; printing costs alone are \$40,000, and eleven bureau employees work on the project, four of them full-time. Being an old proofreader, I contemplated the proofreading job with unabashed horror, and was naturally pleased to be informed that not all the tables have to be reset each year—just “a good many of them.”

TO ENJOY STATISTICS, one has to know how to read them. I suggest that they are like abstract painting in that they provide the material for meaningful images, rather than being direct representations of the images themselves. I think the ordinary irritation with statistics is similar to the ordinary person's resentment of modern art—you have to work at it too hard, and after all the effort the inner pattern that finally emerges is apt to contain deeply unresolved ambiguities. But our society is so big and complex and active that statistics, which are as abstract conceptually as abstract art is emotionally, are essential to social thinking. Conveniently enough, there is a solid basis for statistical interest among the American people—e.g., the popularity of baseball, one of the dumbest games ever devised, the interest in which would be inconceivable without box scores, batting averages, and the broadcasters' incredible running commentary of minuscule statistics.

GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS, including the *Abstract*, are so cheap that commercial bookstores don't bother to stock them: no forty per cent markup. But all you have to do is write to the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D.C. You can even misdirect your letter: they've got a department for that, too.

Author! Author!

GERALD WEALES

ACT ONE, by Moss Hart. Random House. \$5.00.

THE LIVING THEATRE, by Elmer Rice. Harper. \$5.50.

The making of autobiography is not so much a process of remembering as it is of editing and organizing the memories. It is an occasion in which the author can show the world the face that he believes is his or that he wishes were his. The retired general can explain his losses on the battlefield and the retired politician his losses at the ballot box. The rugged individualist can trace the straight and virtuous line that led him from railroad flat to executive suite. What is more, the autobiographer, as likely as not, is telling the truth, or a truth; if facts are occasionally awry and interpretations sound like special pleading, there is a kind of personal validity to the self-image that the autobiographer offers the reader.

The ruminations are the result of my having just finished reading Moss Hart's *Act One*. Forgoing the tradition that theatrical autobiography is simply anecdotal, the playwright has attempted to give a picture of himself as the Bronx boy with a Broadway dream who, through a mixture of good luck and hard work, became a rich and successful dramatist. “I have a pet theory of my own,” Hart says early in the book, “that the theatre is an inevitable refuge of the unhappy child.” Here, then, is the motivation of Hart's story, the drive that sent him in search of the glamorous success that would free him of both the poverty and the insensitivity of his childhood surroundings. *Act One* begins with the family and social situation from which Hart sought to escape and ends with the opening of *Once in a Lifetime*, an event that gave him the money he needed to turn his back on his past. Along the way we are given accounts of Hart's youthful fiasco as a playwright when *The Beloved Bandit* folded without ever reaching New York; of his one appearance as an actor in a revival of *The Emperor Jones*; of his years

as a social director at summer camps and as a director of amateur theatricals. The last half of the book tells in detail his adventures with *Once in a Lifetime*, a series of stops and starts, fumbles and near misses, culminating in final triumph, with the figure of that collaborating angel, George S. Kaufman, hovering continuously above the scene.

The pattern is one of determination alternating with despair until the *Act One* curtain that finds the Bronx ugly duckling transformed into the Broadway swan. The portrait is an interesting one; essentially, I suspect, it is a true one. Why, with substantive truth at hand, should I have become uneasy about specific details? I am not certain whether it was Hart's total recall of long-dead conversations (call it poetic license) that first unnerved me, or his total forget of dates. “The fact that I was eighteen years old and Smithers was supposed to be a drunken and battered sixty did not faze me at all . . .,” he writes, describing how he got his one acting job. The fact is that Hart was not eighteen. That production of *The Emperor Jones* opened on November 10, 1926; Hart, according to the standard reference books (see *Who's Who*), was born in 1904. When it comes to playing Smithers, who according to O'Neill was forty, not sixty, it may make little difference whether the actor is eighteen or twenty-two, but the missing four years manages to pump the piquancy of extreme youth into Hart's reminiscences. Thus, his failure with *The Beloved Bandit* must have come in 1925 and the teen-age playwright was not in his teens at all. The same kind of carelessness about details has allowed Kaufman's famous curtain speech, in which he said of *Once in a Lifetime* that “eighty per cent of this play is Moss Hart,” to go up five per cent in Hart's favor since it was reported for the first edition of *Twentieth Century Authors*.

All of which makes me a pedant, I suppose. Still, there is no reason why *Act One* could not have offered