

A Boy Is a Boy Is a Boy

"Five Boyhoods: Howard Lindsay, Harry Golden, Walt Kelly, William K. Zinsser and John Updike," edited by Martin Levin (Doubleday. 198 pp. \$3.95), tells what it was like to be a child during each decade of the first half of the twentieth century. Margaret Parton, who is herself the mother of a small son, is associate editor of *Ladies' Home Journal*.

By MARGARET PARTON

NOT TOO long ago Mr. Martin Levin had an interesting and amiable idea: he would ask five gentlemen of literary reputation to recall the years of their boyhoods, each of which occurred during a different decade of the twentieth century. Out of this, it no doubt appeared, would emerge a vivid picture of the changes that have convulsed America during the last fifty years.

Well, yes. But what really emerges from this totally engaging little book is that a boy is a boy is a boy—whether he was born in 1892 or 1932. This should be of great comfort to today's parents, who are constantly being told that their post-atomic offspring are bound to be a race apart, though they seem to be just as allergic to piano lessons and just as fond of lico- rice sticks as some of these illustrious predecessors.

It is the details that vary, and not the essence. Mr. Lindsay, for instance, remembers when President McKinley was shot. And Mr. Updike was a shocked thirteen-year-old the day President Roosevelt died. But these were not the important things; the important things were families, detestable sisters, how many flies you could kill for a penny, speculation about sex, and how to make and keep a friend. The big world outside came later.

Mr. Lindsay's father was a nature healer, and may have contributed some of his histrionic abilities to his son's future career in the theatre. The parents separated early, and young Howard grew up in Atlantic City—mostly under the boardwalk, when he was not taking elocution lessons, attending Sunday schools, or selling newspapers.

When he wanted to enter the theatre his grandmother, who had helped to raise him, remarked: "I think Howard will make a good actor. He's so fond of staying up late nights."

Mr. Golden grew up on New York's lower East Side, where no one was allowed to remain a child for very long. More than any of the others, Mr. Golden sees himself sociologically, as part of a group, and specifically, as a Jew—"a most fantastic and interesting fraternity to belong to." And, indeed, he makes it seem so in all its ebullient and rich excitement.

Bridgeport, Connecticut, in the mid-Twenties was the setting for Walt Kelly's childhood. But perspective on the Twenties came later, and the creator of Pogo remembers them as a time of penny candies, battery radios, player pianos, and an ancient Studebaker named Susanna that kept breaking

down on an interminable trip to ancestral Philadelphia.

William K. Zinsser, who might have been expected to have some vivid recollections of the Depression, sat it out during a prosperous boyhood on Long Island. It was "an unreal boyhood," he feels, and it followed the upper-class pattern of private schools, dancing classes, tennis, expensive and hated summer camps, prep school, and the inevitable progression to debutante parties at the Ritz and the Plaza. He was eventually rescued from all this by a love of sports and newspapering; and he never noticed the breadlines until they were all over.

These four reminiscences are sunny, gay, and lightly charming. It is when we come to the fifth and last, the boyhood of John Updike, that another note sounds. It is not that Mr. Updike's boyhood in "the misted, too-rich Pennsylvania air" was so different from any of the others; it wasn't. It is only that the others are competent professionals, while Mr. Updike is a creative artist. Which means that he remembers and records the shadows as well as the stretches of sunlight. Boyhood, he reminds us, is not only a matter of penny candy, no matter when you live it.

Your Literary I. Q.

Conducted by John T. Winterich

EVERYBODY IS OF SOMEWHERE

Here are twenty titles (old, new; fact, fiction; poetry, prose, drama) in each of which the lady or gentleman in the leading role has been separated from his or her proper setting. Nan Carpenter of Missoula, Montana, asks you to match person (first column) with locale (second column) with author (third column). Answers on page 60.

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|-----------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. "Alice" | () "a-Green" | () J. Donald Adams |
| 2. "Amadis" | () "de Alfarache" | () Matteo Alemán |
| 3. "Anna" | () "de Tormes" | () Maxwell Anderson |
| 4. "Anne" | () "of Athens" | () Frank Baum |
| 5. "Beverly" | () "of Bulloigne" | () Arnold Bennett |
| 6. "Copey" | () "of Gaul" | () Richard Carew (from Tasso) |
| 7. "Diana" | () "of Geierstein" | () Thomas Deloney |
| 8. "Guy" | () "of Graustark" | () Robert Greene |
| 9. "George" | () "of Harvard" | () Thomas Hardy |
| 10. "Godfrey" | () "of Kirkonnell" | () Hurtado de Mendoza |
| 11. "Guzman" | () "of Lorraine" | () Sir Thomas Malory |
| 12. "Helen" | () "of Newbury" | () George Barr McCutcheon |
| 13. "Jack" | () "of Old Vincennes" | () Medieval romance |
| 14. "Joan" | () "of Oz" | () George Meredith |
| 15. "Launcelot" | () "of Sunnybrook Farm" | () Scotch ballad |
| 16. "Lazarillo" | () "of the Crossways" | () Sir Walter Scott |
| 17. "Ozma" | () "of the D'Urbervilles" | () William Shakespeare <i>et al.</i> |
| 18. "Rebecca" | () "of the Five Towns" | () Maurice Thompson |
| 19. "Tess" | () "of the Lake" | () Vasco de Lobiera <i>et al.</i> |
| 20. "Timon" | () "of Warwick" | () Kate Douglas Wiggin |

Personal History

Continued from page 39

Arthur Throckmorton, first a minor courtier, then a prosperous country gentleman. Unlike Raleigh, Throckmorton did not move at the center of high affairs of state; unlike Raleigh, again, he was only marginally involved in enterprises of great pith and moment. But through his faithful recording, day by day, of his own activities, we obtain a marvelous view of a way of life, a perfect Elizabethan and early Jacobean miniature. As a good diarist he records everything: the state of his health and his finances, his travels (we follow him on the Grand Tour), his estate business, his courtship and married life, his purchases of books, furniture, and food, all the day-to-day events that befall himself and his friends and his family. We find out just how he furnishes the interior of his house, what treatments and medicines the doctors prescribe for his various ailments, how he tries to make up a quarrel with his wife by sending her a present of twenty shillings.

But the really exciting thing about Dr. Rowse's book is the organic connection between these two levels of history. For Raleigh secretly married and got with child Throckmorton's sister, Bess, while she was maid-of-honor to Queen Elizabeth and Raleigh himself was still in some favor at Court. For this the pair of them were sent to the Tower, and it is this that marked the beginning of the long period of Raleigh's downfall.

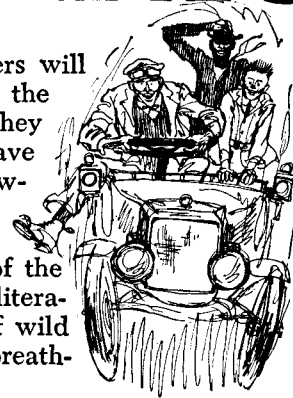
Thus Throckmorton and Raleigh became brothers-in-law. And the medicinal purges and bloodlettings Throckmorton so faithfully describes have their counterpart in the purges and bloodlettings of the high realm of politics. The total effect of the junction between these two lives as we see them unfolding before us—Raleigh's great endeavors surrounded by alarms and excursions, and Throckmorton's humdrum life of business and ease—has its best analogy in music. Imagine a florid tenor aria, sung with martial vigor, bristling with trills and *foritura*—and accompanied by a steady "oom-pa-pa, oom-pa-pa" from the orchestra. A sharp contrast, indeed; but the combination sounds good. And, for similar reasons, Dr. Rowse's book reads well.



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