

**A Wind to Shake the World:
The Story of the 1938 Hurricane**

by *Everett S. Allen*

Little, Brown, 370 pp., \$10

THE most vivid memory of my childhood is the hurricane of 1938. I didn't know it was a hurricane because in those days there was virtually no advance warning. That's why so many people—about 700—died. All I knew as I struggled home after school was that it was a terrible storm. The sky was a peculiar yellow, and the wind blew so hard that I had to cling to telephone poles as I inched my way along Broad Street in Providence. As I passed Calvary Baptist Church, roof slates were sailing through the air like lethal Frisbees, and enormous old elms were being torn out by the roots.

From that day to this, I had never had a full picture of the enormity of the storm. Then I read this splendid book. Allen has captured the tempest's awful majesty as it smashed its way along Long Island and into southern New England, the first hurricane to hit the Northeast in living memory. He tells hundreds of individual stories of tragedy and horror and heroism. Houses were lifted by surging waves and deposited well inland. Thousands of other buildings were smashed to bits. Waves rapped people who simply could not believe what was happening. Tides were so high that boats collided with a Boston-bound train in Connecticut; winds were so strong—in some places gusts topped 75 mph—that roofs were ripped right off buildings. It seemed sheer chance determined who would survive and who would perish. It's an extraordinary story, and Allen—a fledgling reporter at the time—tells superbly what happened on a day that hundreds of thousands will never forget.

—RICHARD J. WALTON

Midnight Baby

by *Dory Previn*

Macmillan, 224 pp., \$8.95

So it's all true. Those haunting little ricky-ticky numbers that Dory Previn has been singing in that wistful way of hers are not just figments of her vivid imagination but also fragments of pure autobiography. This lonely lady of the Hollywood Hills tells her story in *Midnight Baby*, a 200-odd-page gloss on those horror-show lyrics that have chilled her rather special following into a loyal cult.

Previn grew up plain Dorothy Langan in Woodbridge, N.J.—Irish Catholic and poor, a singer and dancer for nickels and dimes in local talent shows, pushed on in order to realize the failed dreams of her parents. Her mother, Flo, was an alcoholic who had the good sense and self-control to keep the stuff out of reach—most of the time. Her father, Mike, a walking basket case if there ever was one, came out of World War I mentally ill (“shell-shocked,” according to the old terminology), personally convinced he could have no children. Well, he had children. The first was Dory, who was the image of him, although he kept denying (even to her face) that he was her father. When Dory's sister was born, Mike became so obsessed by his imagined injury that he boarded up the three of them—mother and two daughters—in the dining room and wouldn't let them out, refusing to acknowledge for four and a half months that they even existed.

Family is fate. The messes we are were made of us before we ever had a say in the matter. Not all of us are smart enough

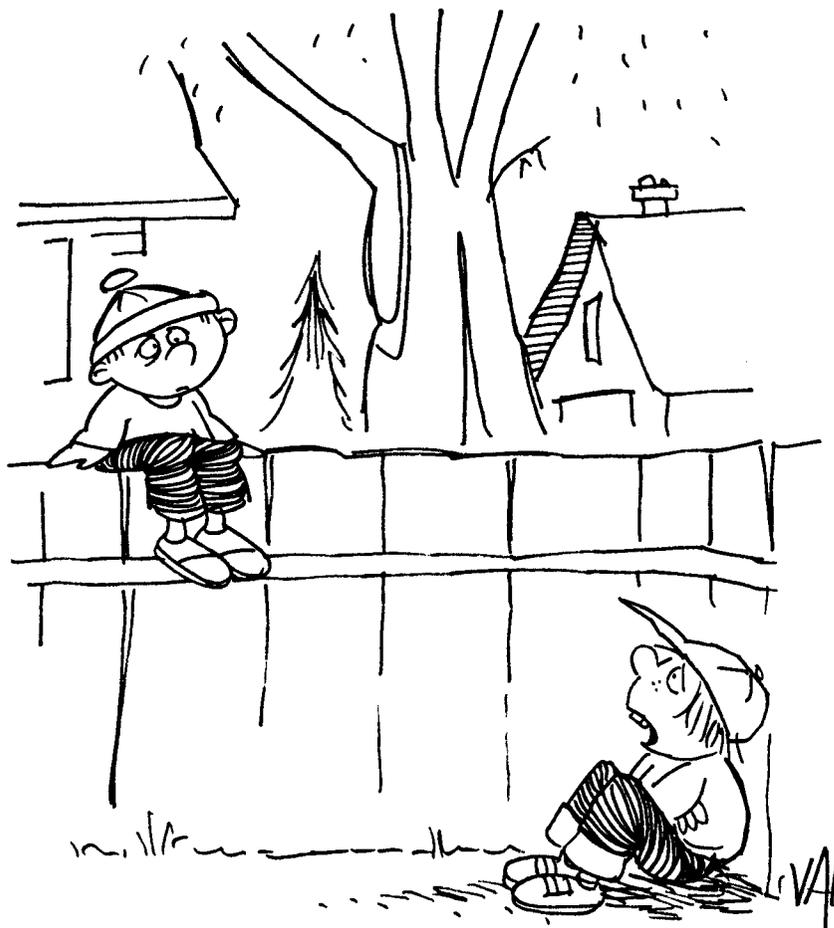
to realize it—Dory Previn won that knowledge after a breakdown of her own—nor talented enough to shape art from it, as she has in her songs. She got at least that from it—but at the price she paid, it was no bargain. —BRUCE COOK

**Fraser Young
Literary Crypt No. 70**

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer on page 62.

YW YD UAWWAO WF
SDG DFBA FZ WIA MNAD-
WYFVD WISV WF GVFC
SXX WIA SVDCAOD.

—WINOUAO



*“Have you noticed kids are out of fashion?
They've got us down to zero population.”*

Trade Winds

by William Cole

Moss Gathers

Light verse is having a rough time of it lately. Poets write it, but almost nobody publishes it, in magazine or in book form. I speak as one with a manuscript going the rounds. So we can be grateful that Howard Moss's light verse *is* published, this time in *A Swim off the Rocks* (Atheneum, October 15, \$3.95, paper). He's the poetry editor of *The New Yorker*, author of nine books of poetry, and winner of many an award. His verse is witty, sophisticated, and immensely skilled. I've always loved "Tourists," which begins, "Cramped like sardines on the Queens, and sedated,/The sittings all first, the roommates mismatched . . ." and ends, "Subsiding like Lawrence in Florence, or crazily/Ending up tending up shop in Fiesole." That and most of the other poems are too long to reproduce, but here's the shortest, "Geography: A Song":

There are no rocks
At Rockaway,
There are no sheep
At Sheepshead Bay,
There's nothing new
In Newfoundland,
And silent is
Long Island Sound.

Natals

There isn't much more that can be said about birthdays than you'll find in Linda Rannells Lewis's *Birthdays: Their Delights & Disappointments, Past & Present, Worldly, Astrological, & Infamous* (Atlantic-Little, Brown, October 26, \$10). I believe that birthdays are for children and have just suffered through a sticky one (ice cream, cake, candy) and the traumatic month that preceded it. Mrs. Lewis tells us how birthdays have been celebrated from the Greeks on down, explains different birthday customs around the world, and describes the eccentricities of some of the famous on "their day." She's almost as skeptical about astrology as I am. Right now, 50 million Americans are very much involved in this claptrap, but they're not the first or the worst: "Louis XIV is said to have concealed an astrologer behind the curtains of his bridal chamber so that the precise moment of conception of a possible heir might be known for

the purpose of casting an accurate horoscope." We are also told that Arlene Dahl, the ex-movie queen, managed to arrange the cesarean birth of her son in December because "Sagittarians are great humanitarians." Mrs. Lewis also supplies a list of five or six famous people born on each day of the year, one of which I suspect is likely to be *your* birthday. It's a book to keep in mind for a birthday present.

Strange Bunch of Fellahs

Well, let's scratch another country off the list of places to visit. I've just finished *A New Yorker in Egypt* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, November 1, \$10.95), by Hans Koning, a reliable reporter who has nothing pleasant to say about the country. What did he find? Filth and disease, mediocre food, tacky hotels, unreliable transportation, abundant tourist traps, evasive officials, the supercilious rich, and corruption on all sides. Oh, yes, he admires the antiquities, but he advises you to go see them all alone during off-hours. "The guides treat the Pharaonic past as a kind of brothel in which they act as pimps." Koning supplies prospective visitors with a list of points, one of which is a recommendation: "Get all the inoculations in the book. The world is not getting cleaner

but dirtier, and Cairo is in the van of the development." Egyptian Tourist Board, please copy.

Horse Protestants

When I lived in Ireland for a short time, I ran across a number of "horse Protestants"—landed Anglo-Irish who knew and talked about nothing but horses. They can be terrible bores. But the Kirkwood family in David Thomson's *Woodbrook* (Universe Books, October 18, \$10), although horse Prods, are not bores; the father is a painter, the mother a singer, and the two daughters are delights. Their family has lived in western Ireland since the early seventeenth century—always on the same huge estate, in a falling-down mansion, and with horses. But no money. The book, which reads like a novel (in fact, for the first twenty pages I thought it *was* a novel until I stumbled across a footnote), is a mix of autobiography, travel, and history. The thread that runs throughout is author David Thomson's love for Phoebe, the older child, who was eleven to his eighteen when he first came to tutor the girls. It is a totally absorbing book, rich in its descriptions of life in the great house, where the servants and stable hands worked without pay, as was traditional until recently. The author, a Scotsman, breaks into long stretches of Irish history from time to time, and your blood will run cold when you read how the English occupier treated the Irish. There's a lot about the breathtaking beauty of the countryside and the delights of fairs, Irish wakes, and old Irish "characters." ©

