in the chest, all Deaver could think was, "The governor had a good arm and I admired him for it."

Respectable Washington has criticized Deaver's trading White House influence for money. Most of these critics are less offended by the morality of peddling influence than by the garish way Deaver cashed in—for example, posing, car phone in hand, for a *Time* magazine cover headlined, "Who Is This Man Calling?" Deaver does seem more dense about ethics than most Washington influence-peddlers, and he lied to federal investigators about his lobbying. But reading Deaver's memoir, you can't help feeling sorry for him. He looked around and saw a corrupt but socially sanctioned way to cash in on his years of sacrifice. He was just a bit greedier than most. At the end of his long romance with Ronald Reagan, Deaver had only a dim sense of what he believed in and a dimmer sense of who he was. Getting rich was the only way he knew to get it back.

—*Timothy Noah*

The Drowned and the Saved. Primo Levi. *Summit, $17.95.* Judeo-Christian culture takes comfort in believing that men who suffer unjustly, enduring privation and physical torture, can retain their moral fortitude and even draw strength from it. Primo Levi, a survivor of Auschwitz, shows how this notion stopped at the door of the Nazi death camps. History may portray the prisoners as martyrs, but Levi believes they were far from innocent. Rather than sanctifying its victims, Levi writes, Nazism degraded them.

To survive, one had to live as an animal in a state of nature. Constant theft forced the prisoners to cling to their meager possessions at all times. Unselfish prisoners, those who assumed the burdens of the weak or shared their rations with the starving, were among the first to die. "Men died not despite their valor but because of it," Levi writes. The shame Levi felt from his failure to maintain solidarity with other Jews grew more acute after his liberation from Auschwitz. His postwar experience, like that of other survivors, refutes the myth that liberation brings "quiet after the storm."

Levi leaves no doubt that he finds the Nazis guilty for their crimes. He is less certain about Jews who collaborated with the Nazis. The collaborators ranged from the low-ranking functionaries to the "Kapos," the chiefs of the labor squads who beat the prisoners and participated in their selections for the gas chambers. Levi maintains that the need to survive—for collaboration was the prisoner's only hope—makes it difficult to judge guilt or innocence by conventional standards.

The lost morality of Auschwitz prevented Levi from believing in any form of divine providence. A secular Jew, he is proud to have overcome the impulse to pray for divine intervention on the threshold of the gas chamber. The shattering of this faith by the senseless violence of National Socialism is the theme of the book.

Levi speaks frequently about the incidence of suicide among the survivors following their liberation. He tells the story of Jean Amery, a respected French intellectual before the war whose life after liberation was a continual battle against humiliation and depression. "Anyone who has been tortured remains tortured...," Amery says. "Faith in humanity...is never acquired again." He committed suicide in 1978.

The reference to Amery is haunting, for Levi threw himself into the well of the four-story spiral staircase in his apartment building last April. One cannot know the exact reason for his apparent suicide, but the death is a tragic if logical conclusion to his life. A chemist by profession, Levi worked for 30 years in a paint factory, writing mostly on weekends. He wrote out of an absolute need to tell about Auschwitz, and his lucid and unpretentious prose reflects the simple drive of the storyteller. Yet Levi's story, one of shame and anguish, offered no chance of full recovery.

—*Charles Montgomery*

Separate Pasts

Growing Up White in the Segregated South

Melton A. McLaurin

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Invisible Frontiers: The Race to Synthesize a Human Gene. Stephen S. Hall. *Atlantic Monthly Press, $19.95.* Every year authorities make predictions that turn out to be wrong, forecasting shortages of some commodity—oil, hospital beds, American-born field goal kickers—that correct themselves. People forget about the prediction, the experts move on to some new crisis, and nothing much comes of it.

In one instance, however, there were lasting and remarkable consequences from a mistaken forecast made by a consensus of experts in the mid-1970s: the world's diabetic population, they said, would soon face a shortage of insulin. The prediction was so dramatic it spawned an entire industry—biotechnology. Today, biotech companies employ thousands of people for work that has nothing to do with insulin—making drugs for heart attack victims and growth hormones and performing AIDS research. Early investors in these businesses have become rich and biotech has replaced computers as the glamour industry of Wall Street. This all came about because the experts were wrong about insulin.

Stephen Hall, a freelance science writer, describes in this fine book how a few mistakes, a lot of fear, and plenty of capital produced America's gene-splicing industry. He begins with the pancreases of slaughtered cows and pigs from which insulin is produced. With Americans in the 1970s consuming less red meat, the supply of carcasses appeared to be diminishing, just as an aging U.S. population was beginning to produce more insulin-dependent diabetics. The perceived shortage triggered a race to mass-produce human insulin by synthesizing a human insulin gene.

The bureaucratic mishap that started the race probably stemmed from an official who prepared projections for the Food and Drug Administration, who based his data on a mistake in an Eli Lilly training brochure that confused kilograms with pounds. "The whole thing was rubbish. There never was a shortage of pig pancreases, and there never will be," a pharmaceutical executive tells Hall. The synthesized insulin, it turned out, had neither economic nor significant medical advantages over the pig variety.

Nevertheless, the insulin scare attracted a formidable array of scientific talent. They were drawn by the chance to do what they called "Big Guy Science"—to tackle the handful of problems whose solutions held promise of a Nobel Prize. A few of them were also drawn by the opportunities it held for making them rich. The race became bicoastal. In San Francisco, a University of California scientist named

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—Robert B. Reich
John F. Kennedy School of Government

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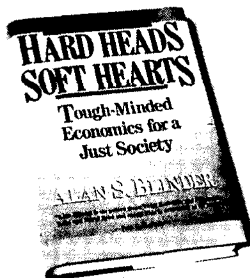

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