

Manipulates Science and Gambles With Your Future, succeeded on two levels. First, it downplayed silicosis so well that it has been until recently regarded as a disease of the past (even though the National Institute for National Safety and Health estimates that 100,000 workers are still at risk).

Secondly, since AHF appeared to be independent and scholarly but was actually funded by industry, it paved the way for what public relations professionals today call the third-party technique—funding a seemingly independent expert or non-profit organization to dispute findings that may harm an industry.

Working from news reports, interviews, PR industry promotional materials, and many leaked internal documents, this follow-up to 1995's *Toxic Sludge is Good For You: Lies, Damn Lies, and the Public Relations Industry* includes countless examples of the third-party technique influencing (distorting) debate on public issues ranging from bankruptcy reform and the Microsoft anti-trust case to the potential dangers of genetically modified foods.

But Potemkin nonprofits are only one problem. There's plenty of other biased and distorted information out there: The book includes tales of questionable scientific rebuttals and legitimate university scientists having to tailor—or bury—research to suit the ends of their corporate sponsors. Opposing a global warming treaty, Sen. Chuck Nagel (R-Neb.) cites the Oregon Petition, supposedly signed by 15,000 scientists skeptical of global warming's severity. To demonstrate how easily names could be added to the list, environmental activists added Dr. Red Wine, John Grisham, and Spice Girl Geri Halliwell.

Rampton and Stauber pay close attention to the interplay of media, corporations, the public, and to a lesser degree, the government. But since they write more to expose than to argue, they sometimes get a little too wrapped up in the tales they're exposing. The

middle third of the book, for example, examines the ways in which corporations analyze risk, but would have benefited from a summary of conclusions.

On the whole, as the authors consider the ways in which PR maneuvering hinders a genuine discussion of

problems like global warming, the reader gets a good summary of contemporary environmental problems, and a few themes emerge.

They support the precautionary principle, which advocates using safety measures when a new product or drug may plausibly pose serious risks that haven't been definitely determined. Accountability is crucial. Journalists have a responsibility to thoroughly investigate the sources of information and perspectives

they write about; scientists should disclose conflicts of interest—financial connections in particular—when commenting on matters critical to industry.

Government alone will not always solve these problems: "With respect to the planting of genetically modified crops, the U.S. government has done just about everything except help drive the tractor," Rampton and Stauber write. Some Clinton environmental and trade appointees left to serve on Monsanto's board; they in turn were replaced by executives from Monsanto and other companies. Elsewhere, some government technology experts are like the Sorcerer's Apprentice: "They are enchanted with the possibilities of this power, but often lack the wisdom necessary to perceive its dangers."

What about the "good guy" nonprofits, those that aren't fronts for industry? When Rampton and Stauber write about the Center for Science in the Public Interest, which monitors fat and sugar content in food, the authors seem to admire the organization's media savviness, even sharing a snappy sound bite—fettuccine Alfredo is "a heart attack on a plate." Elsewhere they acknowledge that some environmentalists use the same scare tactics as industry, and that some public interest groups can cook statistics as well as industry. They chalk this up to "the

constraints and visual nature of television." But they rule neither on whether the white hats should aim for higher standards, nor on whether these tactics are acceptable when used for ends nobler than protecting market capitalization.

The final chapter, which calls for greater citizen participation in public policy issues, seems to explain why. Here, the authors list tips for seeing through corporate-funded think tanks and questions one might ask a local university professor about the integrity of a corporation's scientific study. They support the "citizens' juries" some nonprofits create by convening a panel of average citizens to hear testimony from experts and pass judgment on public policy issues. They call activism "a path to enlightenment" that "brings us into personal contact with other people who are informed, passionate, and altruistic in their commitment to help make the world a better place."

A bit romantic, perhaps, but their commitment to this type of involvement is admirable. They wouldn't want Americans to simply sit back and watch as advocacy groups battle industry via press releases and sound bites.

JOE DEMPSEY is a freelance writer in Washington, D.C.



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How Industry Manipulates Science and Gambles With Your Futures
by Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber

J. P. Tarcher, \$24.95

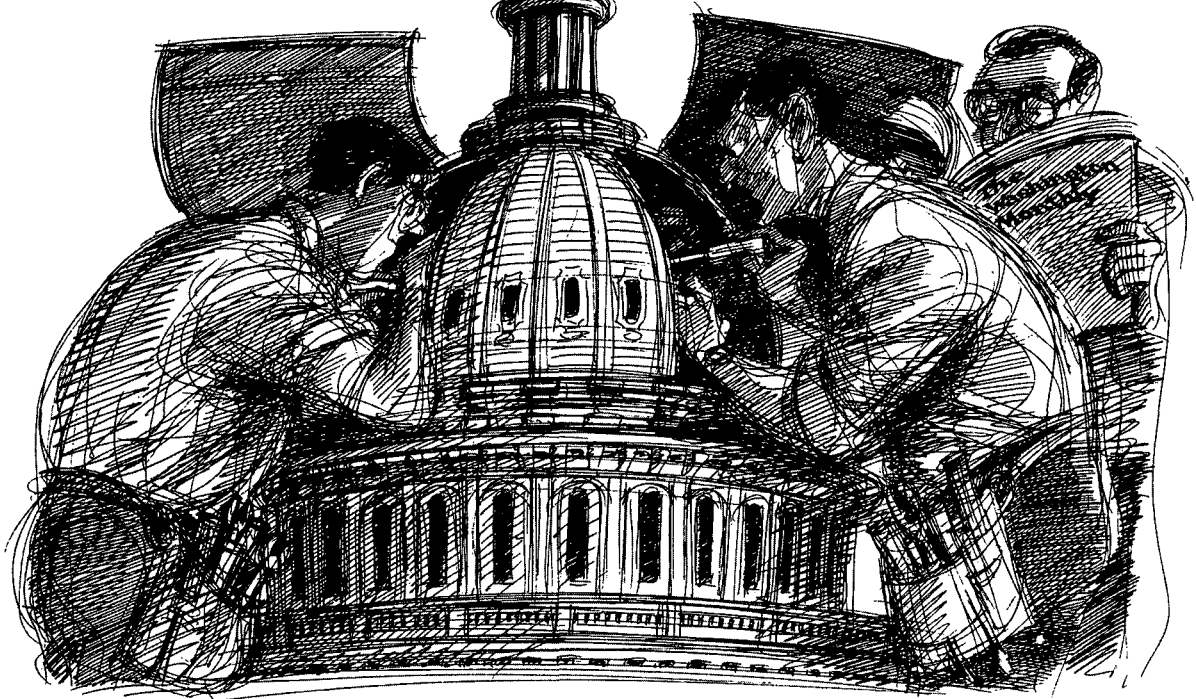
Forgotten Founder

By Michael Waldman

HISTORIANS WHO WRITE ABOUT John Adams often fall in love with him. In part, that's because he is such good copy. In his private letters, he is opinionated, grouchy, neurotic, and scathing about himself and others. (Think George Costanza in a powdered wig.) He is also the overlooked hero of the American Revolution. There are no marble monuments to John Adams on the Mall. But it was Adams who picked George Washington to head the Continental Army, and who chose Thomas Jefferson to write the Declaration of Independence.

Adams himself endlessly fretted that he might be ignored by posterity. "The essence of the whole," he once wrote, "will be that Dr. Franklin's elec-

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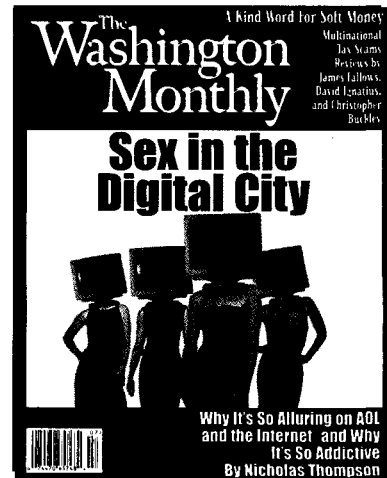
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trical rod smote the earth and out sprung General Washington. That Franklin electrified him with his rod and thence forward these two conducted all the policy, negotiation, legislation, and war." (Franklin, for his part, wrote of Adams, "He means well for his country, is always an honest man, often a wise one, but sometimes and in some things, absolutely out of his senses.")

Now Adams gets the full Big Book treatment in a wonderful new biography by David McCullough, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Truman*. This is not a tome for scholars, or for those who want a detailed rendering of political differences between Federalists and Republicans. At times the reader wonders if the prickly Boston lawyer is being subtly reworked into Give-'Em-Hell John. But this book brings to life a vital and turbulent character at the center of our history, one whose clear-eyed vision has worn well.

At its best, this book captures the sheer improbable adventure of the Revolution. In a few years Adams went from a small-town lawyer, best known for successfully defending the Redcoat soldiers accused of killing colonists in a riot organized by his cousin Samuel Adams, to the floor leader of pro-independence legislators at the Continental

Congress in Philadelphia. He was soon bound for France to serve as an envoy for the new nation, accompanied by his young son, John Quincy. The description of that trip is thrilling, with the sailing ship slipping away in stealth, battered by storms and pursued by, and occasionally exchanging fire with, the fearsome British Navy. Before they were icons, these were revolutionaries, fugitives who would be hanged if the war were lost. Adams spent years abroad as a diplomat, wandering through the decadent capitals of pre-revolutionary Europe. Some have portrayed Adams as an easily scandalized prude, but McCullough persuasively

shows him to be another American archetype—an early workaholic striver, dismayed by the old world's tolerance of sloth and inequality.

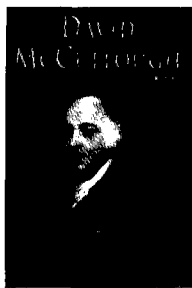
Adams returned to the United States and, as the first Vice President, was the first to discover that his fellow Founders had created "the most insignificant office ever known to man." Succeeding the irreplaceable Washington, President Adams fell victim to the political fratricide of the time. The French Revolution sharply divided Americans; the Terror thrilled Jefferson's Republicans but horrified Hamilton's Federalists. U.S. envoys

were ejected from Paris, and the French navy set upon our ships. Not for the last time, war fever consumed the country. But Adams authorized peace talks, demobilized an army that Alexander Hamilton had hoped to lead, and lost reelection. McCullough persuades that Adams was a war hero president—one who triumphed by pulling the country back from war.

The book is not flawless. McCullough sandpapers Adams' rough edges, and works too hard to explain away his uglier moments. The reader wonders just why so many who knew him well thought he was off balance. He failed to attend Jefferson's inaugural? Blame stagecoach schedules. The Alien and Sedition Acts, which criminalized criticism of the government, are nearly ignored. That Adams was encouraged to sign them by his wife Abigail is a fascinating fact, but you'd have to read Joseph Ellis' *Founding Brothers* to learn it. And it is hard to believe that Thomas Jefferson could be quite as self-deluding and shallow as he is portrayed here. The book could have taken more seriously the substance of Jefferson and Adams' long disagreements, rather than just the emotional story of friendship, breach, and reconciliation.

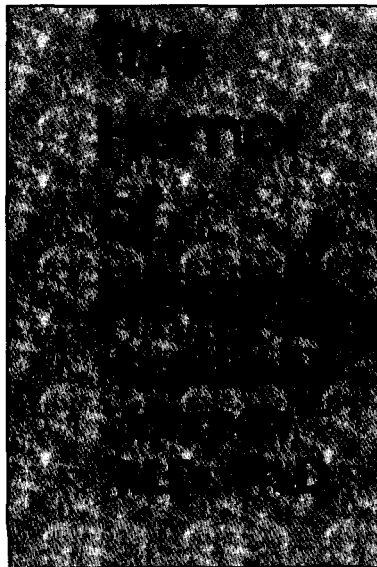
Still, in all, the *John Adams* is not only gripping but also highly useful. There was a time when any educated American could easily summon the spirit, words, and events of the nation's founding. Plainly, that's no longer true. And it's a huge loss. Our moral leaders have long used the ideals of the revolution as a goad, and a goal. They forced their contemporaries to recognize the gap between our aspirations and present-day realities. But it's hard to do that if we don't share those common references. Lincoln's audience at Gettysburg in 1863 was entirely aware of what happened "four score and seven" years before, and King's audience at the Lincoln Memorial in 1963 understood well "the full meaning of our creed." Today's mass audiences assuredly would not. Let's hope this book rides the best-seller lists long enough to reconnect today's public with our own surprisingly heroic past.

MICHAEL WALDMAN, former chief White House speechwriter, is author of *POTUS Speaks: Finding the Words That Defined the Clinton Presidency*



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by David McCullough
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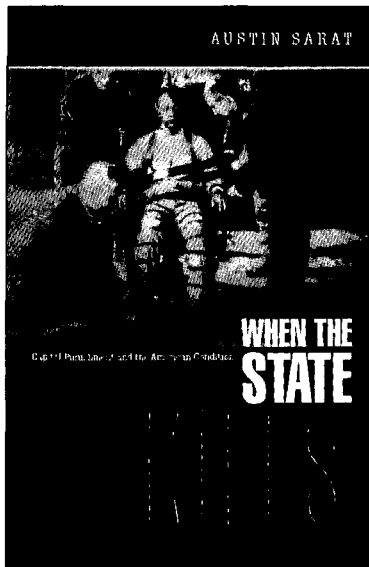
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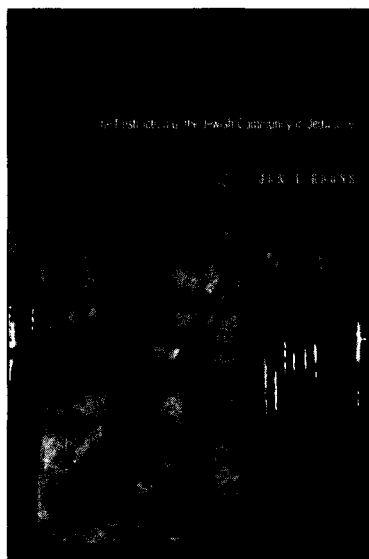
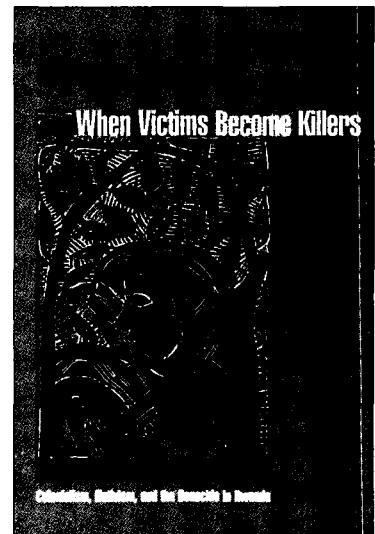
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