

readers to imagine they were there with him. In part it was also due to the sense of discovery that was central to his dispatches. What remarkable person would he find to write about in this town? What tale could be told of this hamlet? His popularity was also the result of the way in which Pyle put himself into the column; he became a type of unpretentious narrator who shared the language and thoughts of his middle-class readers. Among the personal things he shared with readers were references to his own home and family. His dispatches made frequent references to his boyhood on a farm outside Dana, Indiana, and his periodic visits back there to see his family. Pyle seemed to have an intuitive grasp of what would interest his readers, and these references to his own background and family strengthened the tie he had with them.

*Ernie's America* is a skillfully compiled volume. It is enhanced by David Nichols's introduction, which ably introduces Pyle in a way that increases understanding of the man and his work. Nichols should be commended for his astute explanation of Pyle's skills of observation and narration and also for his sensitive treatment of the character flaws that both Pyle and his wife Jerry endured during the years when the couple roamed about the country. Ultimately, however, it is Pyle's dispatches that stand out in this volume. They remind readers that the human interest factor in journalism need not be trite, sensational, or startling to be successful.

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*The Bishop's Boys: A Life of Wilbur and Orville Wright.* By Tom D. Crouch. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1989. Pp. 606. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$22.50.)

Since the first public flight by Wilbur Wright in 1908, the Wright brothers have not lacked for biographers. *The Bishop's Boys* contributes a sympathetic personality analysis of Wilbur and Orville Wright, as well as a fresh and very readable account of their roles in the technological and social history of aviation.

Author Tom D. Crouch contrasts the Wrights with other members of the international aeronautical fraternity at the end of the nineteenth century. Although the Wrights readily acknowledged debts to other aviators, their own advances stemmed from a more practical engineering approach. While other experimenters studied birds, Wilbur Wright analyzed bicycle steering to determine the principles of controlling an airplane in flight. As successful bicycle manufacturers, Wilbur and Orville easily overcame the problems of construction and power that so preoccupied their peers.

The technological history that is at the core of this book is enriched by the author's work with artifactual evidence, including the pair's primitive wind tunnel, flying reproductions of their early gliders and first airplane, and careful study of Orville Wright's own recreations of his early airplanes. Crouch, affiliated with the National Museum of American History, provides a fascinating aside on the provenance of an American icon, the Wright airplane exhibited at the Smithsonian Institution.

*The Bishop's Boys* is most successful when looking at Orville and Wilbur not just as aviation pioneers but also as people. Crouch productively mines their personal papers, as well as an unpublished study by a clinical psychologist on the Wright family. Milton Wright, the patriarch of the family and a United Brethren bishop, provided a powerful influence on his children. For instance, Milton's experiences in schismatic church politics were reflected in the extended patent litigation that interrupted the Wright brothers' flying careers. Crouch also provides new insight into how the sibling relationship between Wilbur and Orville molded their working relationship.

The Wright family home in Dayton, Ohio, provided a haven for the brothers throughout their lives. *The Bishop's Boys* presents the Wright brothers in the context of their family and the West Dayton neighborhood in which they grew up. Although other writers have puzzled over these enigmatic figures, Crouch tells a much simpler but richer story of the two ordinary, unassuming midwesterners who taught human beings to fly.

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*The Middle West: Its Meaning in American Culture*. By James R. Shortridge. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989. Pp. xiv, 201. Maps, illustrations, tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$25.00.)

Using images of the Midwest from popular magazines from 1820 to the present, James R. Shortridge explains not only where the Midwest is but also what composes it. Shortridge surprisingly discovered that originally the concept Midwest was not a mediation between East and West, but between Northwest and Southwest. The term originated in the 1880s and at first included only Kansas and Nebraska. By 1912, however, the term had shifted to the more common definition of the states of the Northwest Territory (Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota) and states more westward, including Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, and, finally, the original Midwest states of Nebraska and Kansas. Booth Tarkington of Indianapolis was crit-